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Messages of Consolation
by Ministers Eminent for their
Services of Solace

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FOREWORD

In life the experiences of death and bereavement are inevitable. And bafflement is usually the mood in which bereavement is met. If we attempt to picture the continued existence of our dear dead, we can only send out our imaginations beyond their present highest trend. Wordsworth held imagination to be reason in its most exalted mood, but our imaginations are limited by the categories of time and space, and these categories may not obtain beyond the borderland of this life.

Doubtless this bafflement is beneficial, for if we were supplied with detailed descriptions of a heaven which we could comprehend, we might become as those who spend their days at dream pictures when they should be bringing health and beauty to their homes and to neglected neighborhoods. Though the loss of dear ones brings sorrow more poignant than could possibly be anticipated, the divine comfort to be obtained may be more satisfying than could have been realized.

This book is designed to give comfort to those who walk with their loved ones through the valley of the shadow of death. It is also designed to assist those whose office it is to minister to the bereaved, who yearn to bring the most enriching consolation to those who grieve.

They who have contributed were invited to do so because of the regard in which they are held for their surpassing ministry of comfort. In these chapters they present the thoughts which they have found to be most comforting in death's dark hour.

If the glimpses of God and Eternal Life which they open are not all that sore hearts crave, yet will they afford real solace. Nor do these Christian leaders fail to show that we cannot have heaven in prospect until we have heaven in possession.

I

THE IMMORTAL

J. Percival Huget

"For . . . this mortal must put on immortality."—*1 Cor. 15. 53.*

It is the high mission of the Christian faith to effect a great deliverance from the power of death and from the fear of death. Speaking to our bewildered or hopeful hearts, that brave and confident faith denies death's finality and forever takes away its dreadfulness.

For, from our standpoint of earthly time and experience, the supremely disturbing apparent fact about death is its appalling finality. It appears to be an absolute and irrevocable reality. There seems to be nothing which can now or ever be done about it. Everything seems ended. Our tender care and loving ministrations are no longer of any avail. They are not only useless; they are not even needed. We are absolutely powerless. Our voices do not reach, our caresses do not soothe, our baffled love beats vainly against a cold and unyielding barrier. The victory of the Destroyer appears final, complete, unalterable.

But it is at this very point that faith makes in one astounding utterance its great denial and its joyful affirmation. It refuses to accept death as a finality. It will not even accept it as in any important sense a reality. It affirms that death is not a fact of any real significance in the uninterrupted career of the soul, that in the truest and deepest sense it is not a fact at all.

Instead, the change which we call death is a natural and needful step in the pilgrimage of the undying soul. It is a stage in the immortal spirit's ongoing. It is that without which any true progress would be hindered, our full destiny unattained. It is not the end. It is not even an interruption. It is instead a completion which is also a continuance, an arrival which is not at a termination but at a new beginning and an unceasing ongoing.

Such change must be, not in any low

sense of some dire and unescapable ill, but as greatly and gloriously needful for the putting on of that immortality of which our mortal years are prophetic and for which they are a preparation. Its necessity lies not in some unescapable defeat, but in our inevitable destiny.

For that which to our too limited knowing seems the end of life is not an ending, but at once a completion and a commencement. Our mortal years close only that they may become one with our years immortal. One task is ended, but not abandoned. It is completed in the sense that the reason for it is met, the purpose of it achieved. It reaches on now to its furtherance and its yet more perfect and glorious fulfillment. We have lived hitherto that we may live henceforth. We who have tasted death shall partake of deathlessness. This corruptible shall then have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall then have put on its immortality.

Men depart that they may arrive. It is so in the far journeyings of the undying spirit. We leave a lower plane of being to enter another and a higher. We terminate an earthly pilgrimage to undertake a heavenly continuance and completion. We exchange a brief episode for an enduring reality, we turn from a soon-ended earthly interval to an unending heavenly adventure and to an immortal endeavor. Too much that is pagan, too much that falls short of true Christian faith still survives in our attitude toward death. We fear its coming and shrink from its approach. And it is well that we should hold to life until our work is done. But when our earthly task is accomplished and the time of our departure is come, if we are truly Christian, we shall go undismayed and unafraid. And so, likewise, if we are truly Christian, we will not sorrow without consolation for those who have gone before us. The rather we shall think of them as liberated for a larger life and a nobler destiny. The full glory and surpassing beauty of that life we can only dimly surmise. That it must be of supreme loveliness we are sure because so much of all that is noblest and best and most to be cherished has gone into that fair new world with the dear pioneers who are the forerunners of our own belated adventuring. So ought we to be prompted and enabled by our faith to think of the ongoing soul. Heaven will restore what was lost or failed of here, or leave forever behind those hurtful and hindering things which delayed and defeated an earthly striving. All the gracious beauty here revealed or prophesied shall there endure and increase and be perfected. In a favorable clime every fair flower of spiritual loveliness shall open and come to perfect bloom. And the beginnings which here were only beginnings and which halted short of any full fulfillment shall there be continued or renewed. Failures and blunderings which so marred our strivings here may there yet be overcome by recoveries. And in that expanding life shall be high ongoings and exalted achievings; new powers of mind and heart shall there become manifest; attainments of worth and beauty possible only in that freer and fairer life shall there be the natural progressions and fruitions of that liberated and victorious immortality.

For assuredly those who have emerged from this limited career do not cease to grow and to endeavor and to achieve. Little has been revealed to us, and but inadequately can our best imaginings guide, but surely we are not mistaken in the confidence that there is "other greater work to do." If we do not know how the heavenly life is spent, in what occupations and employments, in what great new explorations and vast enterprises, in what ongoings and perfections, we are sure that it is not in indolence and inaction, but in achievement and attainment. They who live in that new liberation must beyond all doubting live greatly and joyously and gloriously. The career of the spirit is ever ongoing. The soul does not stop. It does not even pause. On "through" the valley of the shadow of death and out into the light of a heavenly day its journey lies, and on along great paths of destiny.

Thus should we, even in our sorrow's darkest and bitterest hour, think of those whose loss is the sharp occasion of our grief. For ourselves we may have genuine reason to mourn in the keen awareness of separation, but that sorrowing, if unguarded and undisciplined, may have in it overmuch of selfishness. We have no right by our self-considering grieving to blind our eyes to the happy sight of their deliverance and their victory. When our tenderly remembering thoughts turn to them it should be in rejoicing. Not now in weakness, but in power, not now in corruptible bodies, but in bodies incorruptible, not now imprisoned in flesh or in time, but gloriously at liberty in spirits undying and years unending.

What greater mistake and what more pitiful than to bury memory and love grievingly in some hopeless grave? Send, rather, that living love on to those glad souls there in the light! Let that which is of the earth to the earth return! With gentle and reverent hands lay it in the grave! But do not linger there overlong. Instead, by exultant and victorious faith, follow the homing spirit on its joyful way! And it may be that tear-washed eyes may catch some fleeting but unforgettable glimpse of the light that shines through opening gates of glory, or eager ears hear far echoings of angelic welcomings as all "the trumpets sound on the other side." It is a thought which has moved the hearts of lonely lingerers here that our loved ones to whom we bid our tearful farewells shall be welcomed by others beloved who have at still earlier time entered upon that eternal life. Nor shall they fail of other meetings with those great souls of old who, having dignified and beautified our earthly life in every age, are now no less the shining lights in the heavenly Company. Prophets and patriots and poets, saints and seers, conquerors upon many an earthly field—these shall be the comrades of all who enter there.

Nor is it too much to hope that when our time comes to journey on to that fair home of the Redeemed, we shall find the dear and blessed dead awaiting our coming in that land of life and light. "We shall not lose them though they die." All life is one and all who once were ours here are still ours in the unbroken unity of an immortal destiny.

So it is the deep conviction of our hearts that death's separations are not final. We confidently expect to meet again. Separations, however hard to bear, are not intolerable unless they are interminable. It would be beyond bearing if we believed such partings to be forever. But we are sure that they are but brief. However long and slow the years, they pass, and soon shall come a glad reunion which will be one of the brightest of all the heavenly glories. As our years go by, it even comes about that more of our comradeships are on that fair shore than remain to bind us here. And every dear one's ongoing comes to mean the breaking of one more tie which binds us to earth and the forging of one more golden link to bind us to heaven.

For many there is someone above all other beloved, without whom this life can never be the same again, but by whose presence even heaven itself is made more lovely. That such an one forgets while we remember is not to be believed. That such an one should fail to await our coming or to greet us there is beyond acceptance by one who holds the Christian faith.

The Christian's death is not dying. It is ongoing. Life is the reality. It is everything. Death is nothing. Or, if it is anything, it is but the turning of a page, the opening of a door. It seems to us to have a terrible finality. There is nothing we can do about it. But there is nothing we need to do about it, except to leave it behind and go on. For when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

If we will but be willing to have it so, Death will no longer be a terrible enemy to be feared, but, rather, a Guide to lead us on a yet untrodden way, a Comrade to walk beside us along that strange, unfamiliar path, a Friend to be with us when one brief earthly pilgrimage ends and a greater pilgrimage begins.

Or, better, let us not think of Death at all, but of our Guide and Comrade and Friend, the blessed Lord of Life, who himself tasted death for every man, that he might through death destroy the power of death and deliver us who through fear of death had aforetime been in its dark bondage. With him let us then walk unafraid through any valley of shadow. *Through* it and beyond it and out on the other side where there is no shadow nor fear, but only that perfect love and trust which are able to cast out all fear. For when fear is gone Death has truly and wholly lost its power, and the soul made perfect in love goes on its liberated way. This is the freedom wherewith Christ has made us free, and it is his gift in life or death to such as believe.

If I should suddenly be called to go
  With Death, on some far journey, on a day
  When Life besought me joyously to stay—
Why should I then consider him my foe!—
He has appeared so often—now I know
  That he is but the guide upon the way
  To such divine adventures as we may
Not even dream of here on earth below.
Death takes the film of earth-dust from our eyes
  And frees the spirit from its flesh outworn,
That we may journey through the morning skies
  Within the Everlasting Arms upborne,
Till on our new-found vision shall arise
  The glory of our resurrection morn.

—*Annie Lees Huget.*

II

WHY I BELIEVE IN IMMORTALITY

Clarence E. Flynn

"If a man die, shall he live again?"—*Job 14. 14.*

"I know him whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day."—*2 Tim. 1. 12.*

This is a personal testimony, growing out of long reflection on the meaning of bereavement, that common experience of mankind which, despite the fact that all generations have known it, has never lost its sharpness.

From it a number of roads are open. One is the road of rebellion, chosen by those who charge Providence with injustice and ill will because their loved ones slip away from them. One is the road of materialistic interpretation, chosen by those who fail to see in the fact of death anything but the disorganization of masses of tissue cells. One is the road of despair, chosen by those whose sorrow is so unmatched with hope that they bid a final farewell to love and happiness and stumble blindly on through the starless darkness. One is the road of faith, chosen by those who see the grave not as a door out of life but as one into the life endless and abundant. Their viewpoint was represented by Victor Hugo when he said: "The grave is not a blind alley; it is a thoroughfare. It closes on the twilight; it opens on the dawn." I have chosen the road of faith.

I believe in immortality because I have observed the fact of the indestructibility of things, and have concluded that if the material facts of the universe are everlasting, the spiritual facts must be even more certainly so.

The laboratory has analyzed matter. It announces that the molecules which compose it are made up of atoms which in turn appear to be composed of combinations of positive and negative electric discharges. All of these component parts of matter are said to be organized like tiny universes and solar systems, the units of which are in incomprehensibly rapid motion. It may be that with the anointed vision of the life to be we shall see that what we knew as matter was nothing but varied forms of energy. Whatever it is, we cannot destroy it by the processes of combustion, solution, or disintegration. We may change its form but in that changed form we have everything that we had before. What was a tree may be transformed by fire into ashes, moisture, and gases, but nothing ceases to exist. Were there skill to do it, the ashes, moisture, and gases might be recombined into the tree again.

Physically speaking, all flesh that ever moved on the earth is still here. Each atom of matter that once composed the body of the first man who became a living soul still exists. In the physical sense Moses, Cyrus, Pericles, and Cromwell are still here. In the same sense the busy hands, anxious hearts, and feverish brains of each of us will be here as long as the world stands, except that they will have lost their hurry, anxiety, and feverishness.

If material facts are indestructible, what can destroy a great spiritual fact? Fire may transform physical matter, but love and hope and faith are immune to its transformation. Life is the most absolute and immutable fact of all. Who shall say that it can cease to be when we cannot even put out of existence a piece of wood or a lump of clay?

I believe in immortality, because the sense of it is instinctive within me.

The prevalence of instinct runs all the way through the story of organic life. Life in its simpler forms is guided almost entirely by instinct, and in its more complex forms very largely so. Whether instinct is innate or acquired does not matter here. In either case it points unerringly to truth. Each instinct is the evidence of the existence of its own satisfaction, otherwise the processes of life could not continue.

The spider has not studied textiles, but it is so skillful an artisan that it is named after a Lydian girl who is said to have defeated the goddess Athena in a spinning contest. A certain little animal has young that are herbivorous at one stage of their earthly existence and carnivorous at another.

It has never studied dietetics, does not know what a calory is, and never heard of a protein, a carbohydrate, or a vitamin, but it never fails to leave with its offspring a supply of both vegetable and animal food. The water fowl has never had a course in geography or meteorology, but it knows with a certainty unapproached by reason when the season is about to change and which is the right direction to go under such circumstances. Bryant knew precisely what that meant and thus expressed it:

"There is a Power whose care
Teaches thy way along the trackless
coast,
The desert and illimitable air,
Lone, wandering, but not lost.

"He, who from zone to zone
Guides through the boundless sky
thy certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone
Will lead my steps aright."

This general fact comes within our common experience. Nature has not been so unkind as to plant within us the instinct of hunger and then fail to create food. It would be a pitiful joke if we were born to a thirst unmatched by the existence of water.

But there are other hungers within us. There is that within our hearts that reaches out after God, and there is that within us which craves life everlasting for our dear ones and ourselves. Are these instincts different from the rest? Can it be that the others indicate the existence of their own satisfaction, but that we cannot say the same of these? No, God and immortality are facts because the heart instinctively recognizes them. I believe in immortality because I think I have discovered that personality and the physical body are two separate and distinct things.

One day a student friend repeated to me words that had been put into his lips by one of his professors. He said that there is nothing in the universe and life which cannot be explained on a chemical or mechanical basis. To his mind, untried by time and unhaunted by the longings invariably planted by the journeys we make to the grave and back, that statement seemed as significant and conclusive as it was startling.

Indeed, it was conclusive of a half truth. When one takes nervous impulses and glandular discharges into account, they explain not only actions but even emotions. The animal organism is a machine and its functions are mechanical. But that is not all. Suppose we admit that there is nothing in human existence that cannot be explained on a chemical and mechanical basis. The same is true of an automobile, but does that mean that it had no designer, was not produced by a manufacturer, and requires no driver? Back of the machine is the personality that functions through the machine. Its processes may be chemical and mechanical, but the impelling force is spiritual and personal.

The finest switchboard would be useless without the intelligent guidance of an operator who succeeds in using it well in direct proportion to its quality and condition plus her ability and skill. The finest motor car stands helpless until a driver takes the wheel, and the fact that a day comes when the car ceases to function does not mean that the driver has ceased to exist. It means that the old car is worn out and he is at the wheel of a new one. Paul said that life is a treasure we have in earthen vessels. The vessel may be broken or supplanted by a newer and finer without affecting the treasure in any way.

It is the same with the relation between personality and the physical organism through which it functions. We are told that every seven years or so the entire substance of the body changes through the breakdown of tissue cells and their replacement by others. That means that the person who has lived forty-nine years has had seven separate and distinct bodies. The body in which he now dwells is a totally different one from others in which he formerly lived, yet he is the same person. Memories of what took place when he was living in an entirely different body are even more vivid than those of things that happened only yesterday. He is a driver who has changed cars a number of times, but his identity remains unaffected. Why should it be thought a thing incredible that we should pass out of the life of this body and still continue to exist when all of us who have lived as much as seven or eight years have already done it, and some of us have done it many times?

I believe in immortality for what may seem a very unscientific and unscholarly reason, though it is a very human one. I believe in it because I want to.

We have not been made the victims of such gross unkindness as to be placed here with our necessities unprovided for. Need and supply are counterbalanced with great exactness in all the works of nature. We need the tonic effects of the ultra violet ray, and the sunshine brings it. We need the various vitamins, many of which we probably know nothing about, and we are getting them unconsciously all the while. God is necessary to me. Therefore, I know he is. The same is true of immortal life.

I have too much invested in the other world to be careless about its existence. There are too many little grassy mounds where I have buried a part of my heart to permit me to be unconcerned about the resurrection. I turned away from those places once, comforting myself with the thought that it was only for a little while, that these few years of separation are short as compared with the eternities of reunion. I have too much at stake to give up that faith. I shall cling to it to the last.

I have no interest in denials of immortality made by the theorist and the doctrinaire. He who speaks from the academic viewpoint alone does not speak with finality. When I want to know about the question of immortality I will go to the person, whether learned or ignorant, who has lived long enough to know what bereavement does to the human heart. I will ask the old man, or the woman stumbling, widowed, toward the end of the earthly journey. I will ask the heart which has felt the severance of friendship's strongest tie. I will ask the mother who has laid a loved child in the grave. They are the ones who know, for they are the ones in whose hearts experience has raised the question and who have felt the urge of that mighty hunger which is the one sufficient answer. They tell me that the power of death is nothing but a boast, that the most empty and futile thing on earth is a grave, and that the sunset is only an incident on the way to another dawn.

III

FOR THOU ART WITH ME

William S. Mitchell

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me."—*Psa. 23. 4.*

Grief is a lonely thing, for no other is able fully to share our sorrows. Laughter we can share, and indignation and joy, but in the hour of grief, each must walk this strange, dark way of life alone. Never is there a darker, a sadder hour, and its darkest, its loneliest experience is this separation from every human being. We must pass through it alone because sorrow's shadow, like the penumbra of an eclipse, falls only on the lives of those whose sorrow it is. Even our closest friends, those who feel most deeply for us in our grief, are beyond the shadow, out where the sun is shining. There joy and smiles and laughter and happiness abound, because that is the place of the sun. But our lot is cast in the shadow. Our hearts grieve; our lives are bereft.

But there is something which friendship can do. Though it cannot enter grief's shadow, it is able to keep faithful vigil with those who are shadowed. Though it cannot feel the pain, it can help the sufferer by the friendly pressure of a hand when the pain is most unendurable. No help which may be given, no comfort which another may bring, means more in such hours than this—to know that some one else cares, that we are not alone, because a friend is with us.

God is such a friend. His nearness in these hours of our suffering and loneliness is more than mere imagining. He does not reveal his presence by miracles of revelation and marvels of ecstatic consolation. But we know that he is there, near us, when we need him most. Doubtless, we have anticipated how he would comfort us and reveal himself in such an hour as this, but most of our conjectures have been wrong ones. Our discovery of him is no overwhelming experience. For most of us it has taken time even to find out that he is really there. It is almost as though he forbears to intrude upon the sacredness of our sorrow, as friends hesitate to speak to us in the paroxysms of our grief. Then suddenly, how we cannot tell, we know that he is there—sure and steadfast and faithful, keeping watch with us, that we may not find ourselves alone; and we understand what the psalmist meant when he sang, "I will fear no evil; for thou art with me."

In all the comfort of God nothing is so blessed as this slowly dawning consciousness of his nearness. Unconsciously we clasp a friend's hand in such hours and are not even aware that the friend is there, so stunning is our grief. But slowly, dimly the warmth and pressure of that friendly hand makes itself felt, then understood, and, despite our loneliness and grief and tears, we are not alone. So God comes! So God helps!

The difference in God's comfort is in the knowledge that he is able to enter into the very inner experience of our grief. All others must stop short when they come to the bounds of sunlight and joy. Sympathize with us as they may, it is not their sorrow.

They turn from us to smile with those who smile, to laugh with the laughing. It is not their sorrow. But all sorrows are God's sorrows because all men are his children. The God who noteth even a sparrow's fall cannot withhold himself from his grieving children. His divine heart is as true to its instinct of the grieving heart as homing birds to their nests. Where grief is there will God be also.

Goethe once said that if he were God, the woes of the world which he had created would break his heart. Someone answers that "God's heart is broken. It broke yonder at Calvary!" When men named that Christ of tender sympathy and weeping eyes the "Man of Sorrows," they confessed the reality of his holy, human sympathies. These were no masque nor play at grieving, but the bared heart of the Father himself. It is in the sincerity and the reality of this sharing of our griefs that God is able to enter into your pain and mine. God is able to share with us because he is our Father. Every parent knows how the woes and griefs of his children are shared by his own heart, through that intimate sympathy which is born of our tenderest bonds of affection. So God shares that which even our closest human friends cannot know.

Somehow this wonderful Comforter seems a living link between us and our loved ones who are gone. Even the stranger who has visited those who are dear to us and far away seems closer than friends whom we have known for years, simply because he has seen, has talked with those whom we love and have not seen for years. Jesus has something for us which all the mediums and the seances of this world are utterly unable to give. He is at home in two worlds, in that mysterious world into which our loved ones have suddenly vanished, and this visible, present world which seems so lonely since they are gone. He has been with them, yet he is with us. Like the stranger, he is the link between us. Just to know that there is One who is able to pass back and forth between these worlds, to be with them, to be with us, is comfort inexpressible.

That other world seems such an unreal world to us—a world of shadows. Those whom we love suddenly are not. One moment they are living, breathing mortals like ourselves. The next they are silent and motionless and the very features which that mobile, living spirit within had fashioned to every swift reflection of the feelings lose their familiarity and become as the face of a stranger. Where have they gone? How have they gone? All that earth knew and recognized and touched is here, yet they are gone! Nowhere upon this earth may we find them. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, they have utterly vanished. What a mystery is Death! What an unreality that world of the departed spirits!

Jesus gives that world reality. He tells us that in his Father's house are many mansions, that if this were not true, he would have told us. He comes back to us from that mysterious, silent world of death not a wraith, but a living Lord. He mingles with men. He eats of their bread and fish. He offers his wounds for their examination. He companies with them. This is no ghostly visitor. This is the Friend whom the disciples loved before the cross, a Friend whom no power of Death or of the Grave can harm. Through him we know that the spirit world is real, that our loved ones live. Doctor Maclaren, the great Scotch preacher, once said: "Blessed is he who at that last hour goes willingly because he knows that Jesus has gone that way before him, and who hears as he passes into the gloom the words of his Master even in the very shadow of the darkness of death, 'He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but,' even there, 'shall have the light of life!' "

Greatest of all the comfort which Christ is able to give is his steadfastness, his abiding with us after the darkest shadows of sorrow have lifted. Friendship, earthly friendship, is able to offer us only emergency relief. It is tenderly thoughtful and surpassingly kind in the sharpness of our grief, but it is unable to abide. There are other cares and other sorrows, and life itself with its duties and its obligations to be thought of. After friendship has offered its comfort, and wiped away our tears and sat with us its hour, it must return, for life is calling. In so short a time we are left to ourselves and to our loneliness. How unutterably lonely are those after times! Our hearts cry out for our departing friends, but we cannot stay their going. We know they have their duties. After all, it is our grief, not theirs. Why should we shadow their days and darken their lives? Their last, retreating footfalls die away and we are alone. Nay, not alone, for One is with us—that same silent, tender presence of the Comforter. Then, for all our loneliness, our hearts are glad, for we know that, with him, we shall never be alone. There is a constancy and an unfailingness about his presence now which has its own peace for our sorely troubled hearts. He has come to abide. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." We have found the Friend who sticketh closer than a brother.

The marvel of this Comforter is his ability to mend life's broken things. Let grief shatter and rend as it will, his love mends our broken hearts and makes our shattered lives whole. How a broken heart may be healed, how a ruined life can be rebuilt no man is wise enough to know. We only know that these things are possible through God. But we have to place them in his hands. So long as we keep them in ours they are but broken things. They cannot be made whole again until they are in his hands.

Years ago, in a tiny shop in one of our cities, there worked a marvelously skillful craftsman. He specialized in the restoration of hopelessly broken things. With loving, patient care he would slowly fit together the fragments which were brought him and by his cunning skill the broken thing would be made whole again—but the skill was his own. Years of the most patient, careful, persistent toil had gone to its acquiring and mastery. No other possessed it. It was this man's alone. When a patron brought a ruined vase, a shattered statue, a shivered glass to him there was no hope until it was intrusted to his care. The comfort of God is like that. It is God's skill, and no human has ever acquired it and never will! Though we bring him our broken things, so long as they remain in our hands they are broken still. They must be placed in his hands before they can be restored. The secret of God's comfort is placing things in God's hands. Love, and grief, and doubt cling to earth's broken things. They are inexpressibly dear to us. How can we give them up, even to God? We tenderly treasure them. We weep over their pitiful, shattered beauty and yearn for their lost perfection—but we can never make them whole again. Only God can do that. We give them unwillingly into his hands. He puts them together. He restores them. He makes them whole. True, the scars of their shatterings and the marks of their breakage are all there still, but they are whole as he gives them back to us again—broken things made whole by the loving power of God. Now they are his as well as ours, for something of himself has passed into their restoring. Broken heart and restoring skill are bound together in the things which God has made whole. Now we begin to understand. God's presence is more than comfort, more than sympathy, more than companionship. He makes earth's broken things whole—broken hearts, and broken lives, and broken loves, and broken faiths. He speaks: "Behold, I make all things new." So, in life's final hour he will speak, this unfailing

Companion of the Lonely Way, and up from the place of broken things, up from the old earth with all its tears and grieving, we shall rise into that new world which will never pass away, and there we shall find alive forevermore "those whom we have loved, and mourned awhile."

IV

THE HEAVENLY HEARTSEASE

FREDERICK F. SHANNON

"Let not your heart be troubled."—*John 14. 1.*

OUR Lord has his own way of speaking *into* the soul of man. Other teachers are variously gifted in speaking *to* our natures; he, beyond all whom we know, speaks *into* our hearts, minds, wills. Being who and what he was and is, one place is as good as another for him to say finalities to souls that are at once finite and final in the realm of created values; but, somehow, in the Upper Room, he says things that must be true because, in the little and the large, they ought to be true. Finding, therefore, responsive souls—souls in tune to catch and hold his melodious speech—he speaks these universe-deep words of Heavenly Heartsease. The disciples were in the throes of trouble, and trouble in one of its severely trying and searching aspects—the trouble of profound anxieties, the trouble of unanswered questions, the trouble of ultimate good-bys, the trouble of transition from the familiar to the foreign. To them and through them, then, he administers this divine cordial to the troubled heart of man in every time and place. What is its content? What the source and goal, what the backgrounds and foregrounds of it all? Let us consider why he speaks *into* the soul ease over uneasiness, hope over despair, calmness over fear, triumph over defeat.

I

Here is the Heavenly Heartsease of the Christian God. "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." Consider how the Master seizes at once upon a fact native to all normal souls—belief in God. In spite of the superstition and unworthiness with which it is frequently associated, this truth seems to be ingrained in the constitution of the race. Man has always believed in God, the most competent thought and research affirming and confirming it in a thousand ways. One of our deep living thinkers and singers, true to the best that man has thought and said, asks why we should frantically strive to win strange faith when "in love's elemental overglow God's wholeness gleams with light superlative." If —so runs his argument—we have eyes with which to see a branch, a rose, a bird, a child, or any growing thing that God ever made, we may read, as on Belshazzar's wall, the glory of our eternal partnership with the Eternal.

Yet—let us emphasize it—it is not just God, but the Christian God, that constitutes our Heavenly Heartsease. "Ye believe in God"—and in this every soul does well; it is the sanity of all thinking worthy of the name. But there is something richer, finer, more creative, more consoling still: *"Believe also in me."* There is no contraction here, but expansion; no contradiction, but completion; no limitation of the Eternal, but, rather, the proof that God is indeed illimitable in one of the essential aspects of his Godhood: *He actually and morally fulfills himself through incarnating the humanity which has its origin and ground in the deeps of his own unfathomable Being.* In other words, the roots of Christianity are firmly set in the soil of Eternity, and its fruits and flowers are, in Christ, hanging in satisfying and attainable clusters over the walls of Time.

Whenever, by the fingers of faith, we pluck and apply these medicinal realities, we experience the Heavenly Heartsease. And it is a treatment that brings peace of soul, insight of mind, tranquillity of spirit. Succeeding where everything else fails, it is that final proof of Christianity without which all other proofs, however richly logical or convincingly metaphysical, fall distressingly short. Phillips Brooks believed that prayer does not conquer God's reluctance, but takes hold upon God's willingness. Likewise, God in Christ, beyond any means we know, makes the always unreluctant God realizable through his own besieging willingness to enter into our sins, our griefs, our tears, our frailties, enabling us not only to bear them, but, through them, to win victories over our terrible foes, and in the flaming process experience enlargement and purification of our natures.

THE HEAVENLY HEARTSEASE

II

Here is the heavenly Heartsease of the Christian Home. "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you." This is the deepest reading of the universe we have, and, in its higher ranges, immeasurably heartening.

To begin with, it sets the universe within the spell of *Homelikeness.* "In my Father's house are many mansions"—rooms, abiding-places, if you will. But the infinitude, the vastness, the immeasurableness of it all is not the outstanding idea. It is greatly important, however, and this is one reason why we rejoice in rather than reel before the immensity of the cosmos. Thinkers who are strong on wielding the club of Time and Space, and nothing more, are essentially unfair to their own deeper, better selves. The mind has no right to be overwhelmed by Space, Time, Death, Eternity, and all that is within them. God-imaged, man cannot be time-shackled, space-imprisoned, eternity-frightened, or death-holden.

Therefore, the "many mansions"—whether rooms, abiding-places, or universes within universes—these are not the ultimates of the Master's thought. Rather, it is that they are "my Father's"—in all, through all, and over all he has drawn the infinite circle of his own being—and "God is love"; therefore, his nature is paternal—he is the Father from whom every family on earth and in heaven is named.

Then follows the *Profound Certitude.* "If it were not so, I would have told you." Perhaps the whole history of thought and speech holds no such tremendous use of the negative form to express a positive truth. Heart-breaking as it would be to belong to a universe, immeasurable in time and space but without thought, meaning, or purpose, bereft of God, and God at his best—yet, says our Truth-Bringer from Eternity, *"If it were so,* I would have told you the horrible and soul-crushing truth." In brief—let me reiterate it—the Master borrows a bleak negative to declare his heaven-shaking positive, his eternity-founded certitude that what he says is true—so true, indeed, that it is gloriously beyond all finite comprehension.

Crowning it all is his *Infinite Preparation.* "For I go to prepare a place for you." I say infinite because nothing less than Divinity is equal to the preparations in the Beyonds of the Soul. To be sure, our own personal preparation, here and now, is a matter of the first order of importance; but even this is just the august and mystic confession:

"And every virtue we possess,
And every conquest won,
And every thought of holiness,
Are His alone."

So, to express it in another way, Jesus the Christ, our Lord and Saviour, is an edition of historicity at home in infinity; the currents of Time and Eternity somehow meet and mingle in him. Still, no make-believe Saviour, no automatic, impassive Lord is he who toiled and wept and died and rose again from the dead. Here in the fields of time he learned how to play so divinely fair, so obediently true to truth and reality, that Eternity broke its silence in him, heaven found a voice, and the eternal God a Son abundantly capable of manifesting Christian Fatherhood.

Is not this Heavenly Heartsease indeed? Our Lord takes the dear and lovely fact of our human home, and, through an insight drawn to the scale of infinity, gently removes the terror from the face of the universe by transmuting it into a Home big enough, sweet enough, hospitable enough, and, finally, godlike enough to be Christian.

V

ON THE DEATH OF A CHILD

ROBERT E. BROWN

"The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him."—*Deut. 33. 12.*

FEW experiences are so baffling to the intellect, so difficult to reconcile with our Christian conception of life and of God, as the death of a child. Especially is this true when such a child has been born out of desire for his coming and has been bathed in an atmosphere of Christian faith and hope and love from the moment of his birth. Why should he be given at all only to be snatched away ere he had in any full sense discovered life's meaning? Why should the beautiful promise of childhood remain altogether unfulfilled? Why should love and hope so intense and powerful be kindled in the hearts of parents only to be mocked and frustrated by death? These, and scores of questions like them, all apparently unanswerable, besiege our spirits when passing through this immeasurable sorrow.

It is well to acknowledge at the outset that most, if not all, of our explanations of such a providence fail to explain. We may tell ourselves that in a world where disease and death are ever at work it is inevitable that children should at times become their victims. We even may trace with something of clearness the succession of causes which led up to death, so as to say that if this or that had been different, life might have triumphed. We may try to convince ourselves that early death is preferable to a long life under the handicap of the many serious difficulties which often beset mankind. Still, the mind finds a hundred loopholes in such reasoning and the heart refuses utterly to be comforted by these logical efforts to allay its grief. We refuse to be reconciled with a universe that would allow death to get a foothold in the struggle with the life of our beloved. To trace the stealthy steps of the dread destroyer until he enters and desecrates our home—what has that to do with the infinite loss we have suffered?

Is there, then, no balm for our healing, no comfort for our sorrow, no softening of the nameless pain that seems never to leave us day or night? For answer let us turn to Jesus. We discover at once why we should do this. The children filled so great a place in his life and thought; surely, if we tarry for a while, we shall find in his words and attitudes concerning them that which we so sorely need.

Consider for a moment the infinite worth of childhood in his thought. This worth is not merely potential, but actual. "Of such is the kingdom of God." "Their angels do always behold the face of my Father." "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Can anybody read these words and doubt that, according to Jesus, the children are infinitely precious in the eyes of God? In the teaching and attitude of our Lord this insistence on the quite immeasurable value of childhood is basic. Jesus certainly believed that the worth of any little child to God was so great as to forbid all comparison with anything and everything in the merely physical universe.

Let us hold this truth in mind for a moment, that we may more clearly perceive what it means.

It means that God cares for the children. We must read into that word "cares" the significance it has when a mother uses it. He watches over them. No shepherd ever watched over his lambs as the Great Shepherd watches over little children. Is that fanciful? Sometimes it may seem so. What of painful sickness, accident, the blighting effect of sin? How can we believe in the divine care in view of what we see? But can we doubt it in view of what we know? Is there any adult among us who can look back over the period of childhood without a feeling that it has been under the care of God? Certainly I cannot. Left motherless as a little child, I find evidences of God's care all along the way. I doubt not that many people, viewing my life from without, would miss these. Perhaps here is our trouble. We see life too much from without. Could we see it from within, is it not likely our judgments would be altered? In any case, if we are to rely on Jesus' attitude toward childhood, nothing else than faith in God's guidance and loving care is possible. This must mean that God's providential care made room for sickness and death in the life of this little one. I do not say he willed it. I do not know. In this world of free choice, where there are so many bad or ignorant choices, God's will does not always get done in human life and relations. But that fact does not affect the loving, solicitous care of God. Nor can it in any profound way prevent the outworking of his blessed will. In sickness and death as well as in health and life he will be ever near. All things are his, whether life, or death, or things present, or things to come—all are his. God, out of whose love all parent love is born, was with your child in death, wrapping him about in the warm folds of his tender care.

Is that all? It is not all. He will not, cannot, transfer your child from his arms to the cold embrace of death. There are some who believe in what they call conditional immortality. Immortality, they tell us, is an achievement, not an essential quality or characteristic of the human spirit. I find it impossible to harmonize that view with Jesus' thought of childhood. Jesus valued children for what they were, not alone for what they might become. If little children go back to dust, if they are naught but dust, then it is difficult to see in what sense they differ essentially from lesser forms of creation or insensate matter. That every child is immortal in the sense that death cannot destroy but, rather, can only release him, I find to be Jesus' faith. Suppose we were possessed wholly by that faith to-day, could we measure its meaning? If, then, life is a school for this little one, school would be out while the day is still young, while some of us must continue our lessons far into the afternoon. While still believing that God can crowd with rich significance the earthly years of the longest life, may we not also believe that for those who go home thus early there may be other and not inferior means of culture?

Will it not also lessen our loneliness if we believe fully that the children who have slipped out of our sight are really playing and studying in another and adjoining room of our Father's house? There are many things which go to show that to Jesus even the "two-room theory" of the Father's house often broke down. Partition walls vanished and he lived in heaven and on earth at one and the same time. All know how the children dwell far more in what we call the world of the imagination than in our "real" world; how, with naïve faith, they populate their world with good and loving spirits called fairies. Is there more of wisdom than folly in their attitude! In any case, is it not reasonable to think that this glowing imagination of childhood, emancipated from the slavery of things, may grow into a valid faith which will make what we call the spirit world more real, and enfold us with a sense of nearness, not only to God, but also to those who have gone before?

Jesus would have us believe also that God looks upon all of us as little children. In that rarely beautiful picture which John gives in the twenty-first chapter of his Gospel, he tells us that Jesus called the disheartened and grief-stricken disciples "little children." What tenderness is implied in that form of address! What, think you, it meant to those men at such a time? It drew them to him as by an irresistible magnet. For they were just what he had called them—"little children." Life was quite too much for them in every way. They needed him and nothing less. Is it not so with us? To know that it is well with the child is much, but not quite enough to meet our need. What of our empty arms, our helpless and so nearly hopeless lives? Does the Infinite care for our human grief and loss? Christianity gives no uncertain answer. The very foundation of the Christian faith is in this fact of God's love for the very least of us. Not, mark you, in a belief in the general beneficence of the Creator merely, but in a seeking, tender, understanding love toward each of his children—a love which can mean something to needy folk, a love that breaks through, a love that fills empty hearts and robs grief of all bitterness, a love that brings peace to troubled spirits, and becomes, through faith, a perennial source of gracious comfort. How grateful I am that I have seen this thing happen! Perhaps the miracle of parent love in their own hearts has made it easier to believe in love as the final force in the universe—the truest word about God. Perhaps the fact that God prepared so wonderfully for the coming of their little one into this earthly life helped them to see how he cares for the helpless. Ah! many things will help, if we begin to seek him.

But we come at last to Jesus. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." That is the word that satisfies. If God is like Jesus, then all is well. It is well with the child. It is well with us. "And he took them in his arms—and blessed them." Wonderful arms! Arms of the infinite Father and Mother of humanity! Arms small enough to encircle a child, great enough to encircle a world! "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions. . . . I go to prepare a place for you. . . . I will come again, and receive you unto myself."

VI

SORROWING WITH HOPE

Luther Freeman

"Ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope."—*1 Thess. 4. 13.*

All hearts have been bereaved; all home circles broken.

Because this experience is universal, we can face it with a measure of composure, and should never allow ourselves to be driven into an attitude of uncompromising protest.

Death is not in itself an evil. Death is not a calamity. Death is not an enemy to mankind. Death did not come into the world as a punishment. It is not thrust upon man as a retribution for wrongdoing. It was not an afterthought in the divine plan. It is an inherent and essential part of the divine economy. By the mystery of birth we find ourselves beginning this life: by the mystery of death we pass out of this life. Death is as natural and as truly in the divine order as is birth.

Picture the condition of the world if death were to cease among men for a generation. Consider the aged, the crippled, the suffering, if they could have no comforting hope of speedy relief. The present generation is bearing a heavy burden in caring for the dependents of the last generation who are still with us. If our children were to have a continuation of that burden and then the added burden of another, our generation, superimposed, the world would become a madhouse. Of course our affection and devotion lead us to deny that the aged, who are no longer able to provide for themselves, are a burden, but the fact still remains that every living being makes a drain upon the economic resources of the world and when production is no longer possible that drain becomes very serious. The biologist tells us that the continued life of the individual demands the death of those cells which have served their purpose: that is, death is necessary for life. Death makes possible life more abundant. It is not always clear to us when a physical life has reached its limit of usefulness and should give way. Applying this principle is beyond us. So often we see a young or particularly useful life suddenly pass out while others whose days are "labor and sorrow" continue on with no joy in life for themselves and constituting an increasing burden to their friends. We cannot understand specific cases, but the general truth is quite clear. Death is necessary and therefore not an evil.

Death is only an incident, and by no means the most important incident in human experience. When President William R. Harper was very near to the end of his life one of his close friends is said to have questioned him after this fashion:

"Doctor Harper, you know that your time here is very short. As one of your most devoted friends and as a student seeking the truth, will you tell me frankly exactly how death appears to you?"

Doctor Harper, well aware that only a few days were left to him, after thinking for a few moments very seriously, replied, "As I see death, it does not seem to be nearly so important an event in my career as when I was leaving Yale University and coming here to assume the responsibilities of leadership in the new Chicago University." Was not Doctor Harper correct? Death is only an incident. It is not so significant for our lives as is our choice of a profession, or of a life companion, or even of the institution of learning which we select as our place of preparation for living. It is an essential and inescapable experience which must come to every one of us. We cannot by any means avoid it, but it should not give us worry either for ourselves or for our friends.

Jesus' attitude is the correct one. Sitting with his disciples on the eve of his death, he said to them, with no evidence of any storm of emotion, "Let not your heart be troubled." That is an Oriental way of saying, "Do not be disturbed or anxious or alarmed over this experience that is to come to me. I am simply going away from you for a little while. You will not see me, but I shall be living and loving you just the same, and by and by you will go through this common experience and be with me." That is the sane and Christian way to look at death. We are permitted now to see it from one side only. If it had been necessary to our best life here, it is entirely conceivable that we should have been given more detailed information. Men are ever seeking after such information, but I am sure it is not unfair to say that those who have assumed to tell us about the conditions of the future life have added nothing to our worth-while stock of information.

Jesus said to his disciples all that needs to be said when he gave them this simple but most significant word: "Where I am there ye shall be also." What is the future life like? Where is heaven? It seems to me that we have all necessary information in these simple words. That it is to be with him is all we need to know. The place does not determine either our sadness or our gladness. The permanent attractiveness of a place is determined by the friends who are there.

"Where is heaven?" Where our beloved Master is. Where he is, is the all important matter. So, death is only the agent who opens the door into the life of permanent association. Death, like a well-trained servant, relieves us of the worn and dusty robes of the earthly pilgrimage and ushers us into the larger opportunity which the fuller life offers.

The longer I live the less response I find to the ordinary funeral. We make them so gruesome. With darkened windows and hushed voices and quiet step we magnify one phase of the experience—that a friend has gone out from us. If we have anything of rational Christian hope within us, that is but one side and the unimportant side too. We have parted with a friend here; but can we not think of the joy that the experience means to him? That is the other side. If we were really rational and Christian, would not our funeral occasions be comforting memorial hours when together we should talk over the joy and profit we had found in the life and fellowship of a mutual friend? We should speak of his new life with genuine joy and devout thanksgiving. He has lived his noble life; going up and down through the world, he has ever made men better, lifted others' burdens, enriched society, bound friends to him by love's strong cords; and now, having done his work, he is going into an experience that we may believe will give him larger opportunity for a fuller life than he has had here.

Yesterday we were living in a much smaller and more limited world. We were in the embryonic state. While there we developed bodies that were fitted to serve us in this larger life in which we are now living. Can we not see in the undeveloped latent powers, of which we are now conscious, a preparation for the higher and larger activities upon which we may enter when, by death, we shall have been emancipated from our earthly limitations? Why weep and worry, dress in black and speak with hushed voices and make so much of the worn-out shell "from which the pearl has gone"? Why not "greet the unseen with a cheer"? The child has been graduated into the university, the apprentice is now to assume the responsibility of the master workman. If life has been worth while, stop the dirge and let us sing the "Hallelujah Chorus"; "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

We may say with all confidence that we take with us into the other life only what we are. We cannot take our possessions, our position, our fame, our power, or our prestige. We leave all these behind. They are but the external trappings. They are the garments with which we have clothed ourselves. We take with us our personalities, what we are, our spiritual qualities, our intellectual and moral acquisitions. He whose wealth consists in things, like Dives of old, must awake to find himself in uttermost poverty. He whose wealth is in quality of life and abundance of service will find, like Lazarus, the wealth of great welcome and angelic ministry.

It is not easy to say farewell to our friends. We dread to do it when they are making even a brief journey. We wonder how we shall get along without them for the few weeks or months or perhaps a term of years. When we bid them farewell and know that we shall never come into communication with them until we too have passed through this experience which we call death, the strain is all the greater, the heart throbs with pain, the tears will come. We pay the big price of friendship. It costs terrifically to love people. We cry out for the moment in protest, but we do not sorrow as those who are without hope. We say that this experience is a natural, a normal and inevitable experience and, by faith, we see our loved ones moving out, free from the limitations that have circumscribed them here, into a realization of the best in that larger life of fellowship with the Master and with all the noble souls who have gone before.

"And ever near us, though unseen,
The dear immortal spirits tread,
For all the boundless universe
Is life—there are no dead."

VII

FEAR NOT

Henry Howard

"Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."—*Rev. 1. 17, 18.*

Let us look for a few moments at the fear of death—a fear which in every age has paled the brow and placed a tremor on the lips even of the bravest when they have had time to think. We have been so accustomed to regard this fear as natural that we are perhaps hardly prepared even to allow it to be matter for debate. But very often these commonly accepted notions are just as false as they are common, and that this is so in the case of the question under discussion hardly admits of doubt. "Use is second nature," and it is this "second nature," and not our original nature, which is the cause of all our trouble. There can be no question that had man retained his first nature by maintaining his loyalty, death would have held no more terrors for him than it does for the animal creation. He would doubtless have held on to life and struggled for continued existence just as they do, but the dread with which his outgoing is attended would have been unknown. Nothing that is so essentially a part of the evolutionary process as death could possibly of itself have given rise to fear.

It is only because in man's case this natural exit has been charged with penal qualities and thus made other than its simple and original passage from a lower to a higher stage of being that it has come to be invested with elements of dread.

Death of itself is as natural as birth—it owes its sting to sin, so that the conquest of sin means the disarming of death and its reduction to its primary original and beneficent office, namely, the disrobing of the soul, the putting off, as Peter calls it, of this earthly tabernacle in preparation for some other and more spiritual form of embodiment suitable for higher stages of being and nobler grades of service "in those great offices which suit the full-grown energies of heaven." With the disappearance of this purely derived and quite secondary element in death, "Fear spreads its wing and flees with quiet to the darkness of the pit from whence it came."

Hence, says the writer to the Hebrews, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

Hundreds of years before his incarnation Hosea represents Jesus as hastening to the conflict and crying as he ran, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction." And so he proved himself to be, and in order that the triumph might be the more utter and complete, he entered the usurper's own domain, recovering death from the devil's power, drawing its sting, and making it again the mere vassal of life.

The sting of death, says the apostle, is sin. To put away sin, then, is to disarm death of its power to hurt or destroy. By thus discharging death of its penal elements Christ has reduced it to its original office—a mere groom of the chamber whose function is simply to disrobe the soul of its earthly garment, that it may step forth not naked but clad in radiant spiritual garb for its entry to the presence of the King.

We assume the major premise, which is the fact of a future life. Our assurance of immortality rests ultimately on the resurrection of our Lord. Because, though once dead, he is now alive for evermore, he has become the first-fruits of that mighty human harvest that shall yet be reaped when the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised. But because Christ was not detained by death there can be no detention for them or for us. By showing the grave to be a thoroughfare instead of a mere dead end, he has brought Life and immortality to light. They were always there. He simply unveiled and brought them into view, thereby accrediting the universal instinct of humanity and confirming "the mighty hopes that make us men."

But we cannot thus have a hope without becoming conscious of its dark attendant—Fear. And the fear of dissolution has in every age distressed the mind and disturbed the heart of man. The wisest and saintliest with the lowliest and worst have equally shared this dread. Indeed, it would seem that with the increase of knowledge, the widening of horizons, the deepening of thought, the culture of conscience, the development of the social sense, and the multiplication of relations, this apprehensiveness, instead of diminishing, becomes more intense.

The higher one rises in the scale of mental and moral development, the more keenly sensitive does he become "to that vague fear implied in death." The wider and more complex the relations he sustains, the more does he shrink from their rupture. It was long ago noted and placed on record by the psalmist that the gross and vulgar materialist became so animalized that the oncoming of death brought no distress to his mind.

"He is not troubled as other men are." If we place this alongside of Paul's "If the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die," we see how belief reacts on conduct and conduct reacts on belief. The apostle shows that insensibility to an after life encourages men to live like beasts; the psalmist shows, on the other hand, that living like beasts encourages insensibility to an after life. And thus by a vicious circle these two play upon and augment each other. Indeed, the deeper we look into this question, the clearer it becomes that if there be no future life, if the grave be the end of all and immortality be merely a priest's fiction, a poet's fancy, or a painter's dream, then the logic of the Epicurean is inevitable. We might just as well be off with the brakes and on with the pace and say if life be brief, then at least let it be merry—

"Sound, sound the clarion, fill the fife!
To all the sensual world proclaim
One crowded hour of glorious life
Is worth an age without a name."

Death, then, thus redeemed becomes reestablished as a natural and necessary stage in the process of life's development from more to more. It is a crisis or momentary phase in the course of human evolution. It is not in any sense a terminus but a junction station on life's permanent way where we merely exchange a material for an immaterial vehicle in our forward journey. Or, to change the figure, it is a point on life's highway at which we pass from a pedestrian to an ethereal mode of motion in our progress upward to the goal of God's infinite and beneficent desire.

But while the penal element which is thus discharged from death removes the main ground of our dread, there are other considerations which cause us to shrink at the thought of passing out and breaking with our earthly life. And first among these must be placed the loneliness of death. One cannot but feel that if the journey could be continued in company with our comrades, very much if not all the dread of the enterprise would be withdrawn. But even when the junction station, as we have called it, happens, as in a time of calamity or war, to be a common one for hundreds of thousands of one's fellows, there is no such thing as companionship with one's kind. Each must take his lonely passage out through his own door, effect his own exit. There is nothing more sacredly private and personal than the act of dying. It must be performed, so far as human fellowship is concerned, absolutely alone. In the naked essence of our own personality, stripped of all our relationships, severed from everything that is accidental and not of our essential being, our true and proper personality, unseen by any human eye, untouched by any human hand, unattended by any human companion, must pass up and out to where beyond these voices there is peace. Even though we perished together with our loved ones and clasping each other's hands in dying, it would make no difference. Our roads would immediately divide and no two can take the same track.

In the supreme moment we withdraw inevitably within the secret place of our own individual selfhood, where none others may intrude. And it is in this Holy of holies, this innermost sacrarium, that we put off this robe of flesh and effect our exodus from time into eternity, which, after all, are merely local names for the same thing and must not be construed as involving any break in the continuity of either being or consciousness of where we leave off in this life.

It is just at this juncture of loosing from our moorings that our hitherto unseen Pilot steps on board and takes the helm. Not for one moment shall we be left alone to face the perils of that passage out. Whatever else may be doubtful, this much at least is clear from the teaching of our Lord—"If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself."

This must not be confounded with any theory of second Advent. It means just what it says, that each outward-bound spirit will be personally met and conducted right into the presence of the Eternal Father whose children we are. This at once provides against the fear of being alone. Here is pledged to us the companionship, close and warm and tender, of One who has himself not only taken the passage, but by doing so rendered it immune from risk for all who live and die in him. No room is left for fear to those who are guaranteed safe convoy through the uncharted waters upon which the adventure of death must be faced.

This brings us to another cause of dread, and that is the haunting mystery that veils the final foe. The ancient Greek used to beseech the gods that he might see the face of his enemy. And there is a great deal in it. To have to cope with an invisible foe who creeps on us with stealthy tread and shrouded from all human gaze places one at such a manifest disadvantage that it is little wonder, as Paul says in the passage we have already quoted, that men through fear of death are all their life time subject to bondage. Unless delivered from the fear of death man cannot make the most of life. The unknown has always a strange power of awaking apprehension, so that in its presence the soul, to use Christ's own words, is troubled and afraid. If it could scan the features of its last enemy, one feels that half the dread he begets would be gone. Even if one that we had known and trusted in the flesh were only permitted to return and reassure us by revealing the awful mystery that folds this question round—we feel it would be an easier thing to face. But of all who have passed its gates, no authentic voice has ever broken the silence of the grave excepting the voice of Him who is the resurrection and the life. Even those who in the days of Christ's earthly ministry were called back to resume their old-time relations, were either unable or unwilling to disclose to mortal ears what they had felt and seen. And so we must conclude that better than any such manifestations is the assurance that we have for Guide and Comrade One who has trodden the track and knows the way that we take. By his own death and resurrection he has won us the freedom not only of the eternal world but of all the approaches thereto. All the ways are his ways. And whenever a soul comes to the point of departure from this life it finds itself on the King's highway and attended by the King's own Guard. This he claims by right of purchase: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." We are to be where Christ is, because we are with him, and not merely with him because we are where he is. There is a deep and essential difference in this distinction.

It is the soul's personal relation to Jesus Christ that is to give it safe convoy out from this life and right of entry to the Father's house. Christ insists that our destiny shall be linked up with his own—"Because I live, ye shall live also." In other words, Fear not death, for, as Paul says, your life is hid. It is secure from all assault; it is immune from all peril. "Your life is hid with Christ in God."

When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Blessed be his name who trumpets this glorious assurance to all the ages. Fear not disease, disaster, death. I who am the Lord and Conqueror of Death will be your Deliverer. I who wear the keys of death and hades on my girdle will be your exceeding great reward.

VIII

CHRIST HATH BROUGHT LIFE

J. S. LADD THOMAS

"If a man die, shall he live again?"—*Job 14. 14.*

EVERY man pronounces his own eulogy; and he does so after this fashion: it is the word we speak, the deed we perform, the influence we exercise that is treasured up in the minds and hearts of our fellows. When the day of departure comes and man is no longer upon the face of the earth, the floodgates of memory, as it were, are opened and there comes a recollection of certain kind words which were spoken, noble deeds performed, good influences exercised. In the recollection of these kind words, noble deeds, and good influences of a departed friend we pray that they may be sanctified unto our good and God's glory. Then it will come to pass that the words of that scripture are again fulfilled which says, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth:

Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them."

Beautiful as is this truth, it is not sufficient for the needs of the bereaved. Facts are very impressive when we stop long enough to consider them. But to-day we scarce can stop to consider. We are not characteristically meditative as our fathers were. It is a busy age in which we live and we are men and women of action rather than meditation. But there are times when we brood and meditate. During these brief periods of meditation, if at no other time, we are deeply impressed with the mysteries of life and we find ourselves earnestly inquiring: From whence did we come? What are we here for? Whither are we going? And when we come to the experience of death, there is another interrogation which haunts our spirits. It came to our fathers before us. Doubtless no man ever lived who has not been disturbed by the question. It came to Job in the early stages of human history: "If a man die, shall he live again?"

The answer we give to such a question will give color, shape, fashion to our lives. If we say, "No, if a man die, he shall not live again," we become morose and sullen, our horizon becomes contracted, our vision blurred. We only see things around and about our feet. We become materialistic in all our conceptions. "Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die." But if we can say, "Yes, if a man die, he shall live again," then we become buoyant and hopeful, our vision clears, our horizon is extended, and through the eye of faith we catch a glimpse of the loved land that is afar off, and filled with a confidence that is gloriously triumphant, exclaim, "Even though a man dies he shall live again."

But how do we know? Where can we find assurance that even though death may lay low our loved ones they are not gone forever? The immortal life is beautifully suggested in many directions. The sun sinks upon the plains and rises again over the ocean. The moon wanes, disappears, and returns in full-orbed glory. In the world of nature the suggestion seems to be more striking. The earth becomes torpid in winter; flowers die and the green trees lose their beauty, but in the springtime there is a resurrection and nature arrays itself in loveliness far surpassing the glory of Solomon. "The caterpillar dies as a chrysalis and recovers new life under the beauteous transformation of the butterfly." The grain decays in the soil but the germ of life is not destroyed; it bursts forth again into fruitful abundance. These suggestions of the resurrection are tremendously significant and very comforting when rightly viewed. Not that they demonstrate it, but they show the possibility and the probability of immortal life. We have a more perfect assurance than all of this. It is the word of Him who was living and was dead—and is now alive forevermore. He brought life and immortality to light. His is a Word that is accepted by all branches of the sadly divided church. We represent various religious groups and we have different viewpoints on many things, but when it comes to Jesus Christ there is no division—Presbyterian unites with Episcopalian, Methodist with Roman Catholic, and together as one voice we say:

"O Lord and Master of us all,
Whate'er our name or sign,
We own thy sway, we hear thy call,
We test our lives by thine!"

What does he say? Has he any message of hope or comfort for us to-day? Listen to the cheering words which come to us with all the authority of the infallible Christ: "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live." It is the living Christ who gives stability to our faith, assurance to our hope, and comfort to our grief-stricken hearts. Even though our eyes are blinded with tears, we lift up our voices

". . . in triumph on high,
For Jesus hath risen, and man cannot die."

The yearning for the immortal life is ever with us. Where can we find a group of men who do not possess the instinctive feeling that they were not born to die? To live the progressive, ever-unfolding life is an unquenchable desire. It is inherent to the spirit of man. But at such a time as this it is dominant and persistent. We want to be assured of its reality. Christ is the means of our salvation and the hope of our immortality. So we pray with Doctor Bonar:

"O Morning Star! O risen Lord!
    Destroyer of the tomb!
Star of the living and the dead,
Lift up at length thy long-veiled head,
O'er land and sea thy glories shed,
    Light of the morning come.

"Speak, Mighty Life, and wake the dead
    Like statue from the stone,
Like music from long broken strings,
Like gushings from departed springs,
Like dew from down's soft wings,
    Rouse each belovèd one."

Many years ago I knew of a little girl who was accustomed to say to her father every night, "Good night, father, I will see you again in the morning." One dark day the little one was stricken with a fatal illness, and just before she passed away she threw her little arms around her father's neck and said, "Good night, father, I'll see you again in the morning." The little child is always right in matters of faith. The eye not dimmed by the dust of the world sees farther afield. "Good night, father, I'll see you again in the morning." It is our glorious privilege to say to our departed friend, "Good night, beloved—good night." When the shadows are gone and the darkness has disappeared, we will say, "Good morning" on that other shore, and until that time, may God keep us true and faithful, "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain." "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning," for even though a man die, he shall live again. "Christ . . . hath brought life and immortality to light."

IX

COMFORT YE MY PEOPLE

RAYMOND LALOR FORMAN

"Comfort ye my people."—*Isa. 40. 1.*

THERE is no cure for man's afflictions and sorrows. The problem of physical pain and mental anguish is as old as the world, and never has there been a time when in a poignant crisis the faith even of some of the most religious people has not been challenged. They neither whimper nor audibly air their perplexities, but into their quiet, thoughtful and tense moments wonderings, misgivings, and doubts creep.

Many in close grips with a deep and devastating sorrow have striven conscientiously to know the meaning of it, hoping thereby to derive some supporting consolation, but they have striven in vain. As a rule, the ill success is due to that very closeness, for others who in a similar situation have dared to lift their vision from the sorrowful event in their life, and let it fall on life itself, have been recompensed with a reasonable comfort. It has served to draw off the bitterness of sorrow, by removing the notion of a divine injustice. When one can see life steadily and see it whole, the panoramic view reveals the fact that suffering and sorrow are a part of life and not apart from it; even an essential part, a natural necessity, as are the thorns to the rose of Sharon, and bitterness to the bud. The map of life always shows its system of dark valleys. Mortality must cast a shadow. It should remove the sting from the wound to know that that which prostrates us is not inimical to life, as something hurled at us, but in and of it, a rightful part, which more and more is seen to be a just part by the receptive and unprejudiced mind.

God has broken no promise to his children, never having assured them of any other sort of a world. It must be a free world if we are to become what we can be. Those hazards, chances, traps, accidents, by which many of our sorest trials and tragedies come, are the natural consequences of choice. Utopian economies conceived by men for men have failed; so would a divine Utopia guaranteeing fair weather, length of days, freedom from sickness, poverty, struggle—in short, a safety zone of a world; that is why we don't have it. Such a blanket insurance would smother the life out of the beneficiaries, and it is not a good insurance policy to insure death. Life is experience, ceaseless experiments, for which we would look in vain in a safety zone. The world-nature presupposes hazard and heroism, and when no opportunity is given man to be courageous, he dies in his body and is laid in the tomb of the flesh.

The mind, flesh, senses, and all of us that is heir to suffering and sorrow, are but the representative of the real man, the soul, whose growth and perfection he guards and protects by his external achievements and struggles, and the strength he expends is compensated for by being mysteriously laid up as the richest treasures in the inner man. We are made perfect through suffering. Consider the Christ.

> "One crowded hour of glorious life,
> Is worth an age without a name."

That which is must be. The only kind of a world that can make our loved ones as precious and lovable as they are is the world of weathers that we have. But He who sees the end from the beginning, knowing our need in a world that needs must be, has promised us that which survives all things, even his conquering grace to reinforce our human courage.

The sting of affliction is removed when we can

> "With the chastened psalmist own
> His judgments too are right."

Besides that reconciliation that comes from this larger view there is that intimate and immediate comfort in the form of companionships. George Hamlin Fitch was bereft of an only son whose death occurred with a shocking suddenness, leaving him in a lonely desolation. It seemed as if he could not endure the loss of this boy, as much a brother to him as a son. Shortly after he published a book called *Comfort Found in Good Old*

Books, in the preface of which he stated that no other single source had yielded him as much relief as rereading some of the old and familiar classics of emotional quality and power. The book consisted of his comments upon and brief reviews of the works. Some of the selections are as sympathetic kinsmen that came home to his broken heart, while others are more like the nearest neighbor calling him to come to them that his grief might have a brief holiday in some new interest, after the manner of many mourners who find respite from their sorrow by plunging into business. This author was an habitual reader, and confessed that he frequently indulged his habit to excess; in his case his resort was as the nearest neighbor's house. His book might prove helpful to many so constituted.

To those who feel that they must be more closely confined with their grief, a few familiar short works, mostly poetic, are suggested for rereading. First the Bible, and in particular the book of Job, Psalms 23 and 121, and the Gospel of Saint John. Read in sorrow they are different. There is a poignancy in such a desperation that stabs the understanding broad awake, and the Spirit of Truth, now unlocked from the letter, rises like a strong and tender spirit-shepherd guiding the soul through the dark valley. I suggest also: Wordsworth's "Intimations of Immortality" and "Michael"; Browning's "Rabbi Ben Ezra" and "Saul"; Tennyson's "In Memoriam," which was written upon the death of his closest friend, Arthur H. Hallam. In this, Tennyson's mind moves through the whole deep, dark trail of the stricken spirit, thinking its thoughts, feeling all of its emotions. It is the metamorphosis of shock, sadness, despair, doubt and triumph, like a creature that first creeps through the dust and finally rises with wings.

> "Perplexed in faith, but pure in deeds,
> At last he beat his music out."

This immortal elegy will bear at least three readings. Whittier's "The Eternal Goodness" should be mentioned, as well as two contemplative prose works: A. C. Benson's "The House of Quiet," and "Heaven

Opened," by James M. Campbell. These are but a few of the many that might be chosen, whose contents will be as wine and oil to sorrow's wounds.

Sorrow cannot be cured, but it can be mitigated, and what is more effective among mortals than the companionship of friends! Grief is a solitude that mortality can come to but cannot enter. One must be content to stand by, while the stricken suffers and sorrows alone. It is a personal experience. To heal another by one's stripes, to take the chastisement of another's peace is divine, not human. Indeed, if there be a semblance of divine injustice in this mortal scheme of things, it is found in this, that those who desire to take upon themselves the actual diseases, sufferings, and sorrows of those they love cannot do it. Let some scientist discover that transfusion by which this can be done, and he will be voted first of all the famous, by all the parents and true friends of the world. Only to the reach of the arm, so to speak, can the friends come, and there stand to suffer sympathetically, but never enter the heart. Even so there is much comfort in such companionships if they be met—if they be met, I say, for here is something rarely thought of—the need to cultivate the capacity to be comforted.

It is beneficial to give sympathy; it is equally beneficial to receive it. Many, however, are not so disposed, wrapping themselves up so closely with their grief as to be impervious. This has a mental correspondence in those whom we call poor listeners. They are so occupied in fashioning and delivering their own opinions, that they fail to receive others and remain in mental solitude. Such persons are aggressive, but never the wiser. Likewise one can be so subjectively employed with his grief as to do great injustice to himself and to sincere comforters. He hears their voices as "a sad, mechanic exercise." He handles the box of precious nard, but will not be anointed.

Cultivate the art of receiving the comforts of friends. There is much strength in such companionship. Who can ever forget those who just stand by, saddened, in silence, or those who with never a word, grasp the hand, in the pressure of which is that which is too deep, full, rich and divinely unselfish to find speech to convey it to the heart? God bless these comforters who crucify themselves in our presence in the hope that the blood of their compassion may reach the anguished heart and atone for the deep hurt there!

A deep and satisfying comfort may be found in ministering to others who are in sorrow or trouble. This is finding comfort by giving it. And it is comfort indeed when it is substanced out of one's own sufferings. What hand is as strong and sure in leading one perplexed in mind and spirit, as that which has already "grasped the nettle" of life? To fashion the widow's weeds into a warm garment for some soul shivering in a wintry experience, is to comfort two instead of one. So if it comes to pass, reader, that you must pass through the valley of the shadow, do not upon your emergence throw away your rod and staff, nor keep them as mementoes of grief's event, but carry them to the beginning of the trail and hand them to one about to enter, only to have them returned with the grateful word, "Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." And are you not comforted too?

These are some of the productive expedients in time of trial and sorrow; others could be added, but there is yet the more excellent way—through faith. Faith is the victory that overcomes the world, because it has in it the overcoming power of the Eternal. It conquers out of its own certainty. It is the premature possession of truth, "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Its vision sweeps two worlds. Faith here is not a system of traditional beliefs that can be dissipated in some extremity, but that which is as vital as blood, even more vital than the blood of the body. The most the world can do is no match for it; it suffers all, endures all, and climbs sweating, open-shirted, scarred and bleeding to the summit of the pile of wreckage, with its face toward heaven, confident even yet. Faith survives. Out of its radiant vision it speaks. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Faith follows its dead through an open tomb and enters into the border of that new Galilee, where it must tarry with its burden of mortality, but where it sees out of its eternalized mind that all is one country; those departed have gone ahead, vanished out of sight, yet are alive and shall ever live. This faith does, sees, knows, for it is the living, personal companionship of the Divine Comforter, the inner abiding Christ, who ever speaks to the sorrowing soul: "Let not your heart be troubled. . . . In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you."

X

"THY WILL BE DONE"

JOHN BENJAMIN MAGEE

"Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." —*Luke 22. 42.*

THE Garden of Gethsemane is a geographical place. It is also an experience of the soul. We may or may not visit the garden beyond Jerusalem's walls made sacred by the agony of our Lord, but somewhere, before we are through with this adventurous life, we are compelled by circumstances to enter into our own garden of suffering. It is not a large garden, but no one has ever evaded it. It is a dark and lonely spot, yet it may be peopled with angels. It is a bitter hour, yet it may become one of the sweetest and most memorable in our lives.

Some think they should escape it. They cannot understand why they of all people should experience such sorrow. Why should they be left alone, without anyone human or divine who really seems to care? This has been the cry of suffering souls throughout the ages, and many of the really great books out of the past have been an attempt to answer this difficult question. It was the cry of righteous Job. It finds its echo in *Prometheus Bound.* And not all the philosophy of the yesterdays nor all the theology of the future will ever be able to give a satisfactory answer to this enigma.

Upon this rock many a vessel has gone down. Men have foolishly lost their faith in God because they could not answer this question. Righteous Job could not answer it, yet he persisted in his search and preserved his righteousness to the very end, until at last he could say: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee." Some day the question will find its answer.

Can we reconcile our suffering with our faith and understand more fully the words of our Lord, "Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done"?

Come squarely face to face with this self-examining question—"Am I willing to have

God's will done when I really know what that will is, or do I selfishly demand that my own will shall have the right of way? Am I sincerely willing to say,

> "My Jesus, as thou wilt:
>   O may thy will be mine!
> Into thy hand of love
>   I would my all resign.
> Through sorrow or through joy,
>   Conduct me as thine own,
> And help me still to say,
>   'My Lord, thy will be done.' "

When Jesus spoke those words in the garden he was quaffing the last dregs of a very bitter cup. What did he mean by them? Did he mean that his heavenly Father had sent him to this dark and agonizing midnight tryst and pressed this cup of gall to his lips? No! Did he mean that it was now clear that God was sending him to the cross to die and that he would surrender? Did he mean that he would gladly die because it was God's will? No! He knew that he had been sent to reveal God to men and to redeem men from their evil ways, and he meant that though it was a hard and a costly thing to do, he would go through with it, even at the price of Gethsemane or Calvary. He would not let his human flesh stand in the way of a complete fulfillment of his mission.

Too often we think it was the Father's will that Jesus should die on Calvary. Too often we think that to suffer sorrow is God's will, but that to experience joy is just a casual circumstance. If a man has business reverses, he may say in his faith, "God's will be done," but does he say the same thing when he prospers? Does he remember to thank God for his successes? Why do we always think of the Gethsemanes and the Calvaries as God's will, but never the Canas, the Bethanys, the joys of life? It was not the Father's will that Jesus die, it was man's will. It was men who slept and left him to pray alone. It was men who waited at the gate with staves and swords. It was men who crucified him. God sends no one to Calvary. Man makes all the Calvaries. God sends us to perform a mission, to do a work, to be a minister or a servant. The Calvaries are incidental to the fulfillment of such a mission.

Jesus is the perfect revelation of God, and we never see Jesus hurting anyone. He never said even to his bitterest enemy, "Be thou blind," "Be thou lame," "May heaven's curse fall upon you." He relieved suffering because he was like the Father. He made the blind to see and the lame to walk and the sick to arise. He restored the dead to the sorrowing because it is not God's will that anyone sorrow or suffer. It is his will that we have peace even at the price of suffering. Jesus could never have had peace had he not finished what he came to do. It was the divine will that he find peace at the end of a very rough road.

But is it possible for a man really to know the will of God? Many have said: "I never have known what God's will is for me. Once or twice in my lifetime I have felt that he has made the way clear, but most of the time it is all so dark." Is it true that God has a will for us, but keeps us from knowing that will?

God makes his way so clear that even his simplest child cannot err therein. In the physical world he gives us natural laws for our guidance. Even a child recognizes the law of gravitation, though he does not know the law by name. He knows that fire burns, but he does not know why. Natural laws are God's will, written in unmistakable warnings, for the safety and usefulness of mankind. We could not do without them. In the moral realm we have the Ten Commandments and the other moral lessons which have come to us through long human experience, and we know God's way. He says, "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not." If we are honest, we do know what his moral will is for us. We know that we reap what we sow. We know that these laws all work in just one way. The road is so straight we can see to the far horizon.

Does God make his will as clear for us in the smaller incidents of life, and in things pertaining to our own affairs? Yes. The avenues of prayer are open. The ways of God have not changed. He who will be led will be led.

The question is, Are we such spiritual anarchists that we would have these laws function only when they are favorable to us?

Would we abrogate them when they hurt us? Do we say, "Away with law, because I do not wish to suffer"? When we do this we are assuming all the responsibility for the consequences and eliminating God. It is a selfish faith that would demand any such thing, the kind of faith that would escape the garden because of a few briers along the path.

In Studdert Kennedy's *The Sorrow of God and Other Poems* there is a poem entitled "Thy Will Be Done." One of the soldiers in the trenches is describing a gas attack.

> "I were puzzled about this prayin' stunt,
>   And all as the parsons say,
> For they kep' on sayin', and sayin',
>   And yet it weren't plain no way.
> For they told us never to worry,
>   But simply to trust in the Lord.
> 'Ask and ye shall receive,' they said,
>   And it sounds orlright, but, Gawd!
> It's a mighty puzzling business,
>   For it don't allus work that way.
> Ye may ask like mad, and ye don't receive,
>   As I found out t'other day."[1]

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[1] Reprinted by permission of Richard R. Smith, Inc., New York.

Then he tells how the gas came and how he prayed for God to shift the wind. But it kept on blowing just the same. Then someone laughed, and " 'It's no use prayin',' 'e said, 'let's run.' "

And they ran until they were caught by the gas, and choked and fell. So the poor fellow asks,

> " 'Now, 'ow was it 'E didn't shift the wind,
>   When I axed in the name of the Lord?' "

Finally he sees through it when he thinks about Jesus out in the garden praying all the night through.

> "And the answer what came to the prayers
>   'E prayed
>   Was 'Is power to see it through."

That is the meaning of "Thy will be done." It is the power to see it through. I once walked through the mountains of Scotland. At first there was snow, then there was rain, then the sun shone hot and I was thirsty. I climbed rocks and waded mountain streams and made my way over pathless crags. But more and more the scene opened up, the Trossachs grew glorious, and by the time I had reached my journey's end it had become such an experience as a man has but once in a lifetime. We never see the glory of Gethsemane until we see it through our own agony and tears.

"And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him." To him who sees it through, the angels always come. They strengthened Jesus after his struggle on the Mount of Temptation; they met him on many a dark night when he prayed for help; and on Transfiguration, even Elijah and Moses came to give him courage. Angels of consolation come to those who do God's will. Suffering is our disciplinarian. Faith, which comes to us when we are most in sorrow, is the greatest angel of consolation. Matheson, forsaken by the woman he loved, blind and despairing, could write, "O Love that wilt not let me go." Only deep trouble can write like that. And his angel of consolation has become an angel of strength to countless others who sing his song after him.

The great organ in the Cathedral of Angers, France, is borne upon the huge, bent shoulders of giants carved out of wood; giants with faces distorted with the effort of their load; giants weighed down with their never-ending task; yet upholding the instrument which fills the great nave with its tender ministry of music. Such is pain.

Even after Jesus had surrendered everything into the will of the Father he was not through suffering. It had only just begun. "And being in agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground." God gives no anæsthetic for our pain. There are operations which require the perfect functioning of the body, and no anæsthetic can be administered. It is not seeing the thing through to have the sorrow removed. It is seeing it through to see it through. The trouble is none the less real because we are agreeable to it.

Character is carnivorous. It is vicarious. No man ever attained to the highest character without paying the price in flesh and blood. Abraham Lincoln paid for his high seat among the gods by carrying the weight of a nation's sorrows. And then he gave his life to make his place secure.

Blessed is the man who sees it through, cost what it will. Jesus could cry at the last, "Tetelestai"—"It is finished." He had revealed the Father. He had redeemed the world. His work was done. He had seen it through.

With what calm Jesus arose from the tear-stained rock of Gethsemane to say to the waiting disciples, Come, "rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation"! With what poise and mastery this Victor asks of the crowd at the gate, "Whom seek ye?" He stands before Pilate imperturbed, unresisting to the very end of the tragedy. Why? Because, having consented to the will of God the Father, men might do anything they wished with his body, even to driving nails into it. He could endure it all.

Having endured through faith we see that tears are the showers which make the flowers of this garden to grow. Tears are the sweet waters in the golden chalice of love which God presses to our lips for our refreshment after the battle. Tears become the magnifying lens of the telescope by which we pierce the sky and discover God behind the stars.

Emerson wrote "Threnody" when his little five-year-old boy had been taken from him. His sorrow and loneliness were deep and overwhelming. He seemed to hear the little voice. He saw him everywhere. But at last he heard these words,

> "What is excellent,
> As God lives is permanent;
> Hearts are dust, hearts' loves remain;
> Hearts' love will meet thee again."[2]
> —*John Benjamin Magee.*

In the garden of God's will are peace and hope. There we may find them.

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[2] Reprinted by permission of Houghton Mifflin Company, publishers, New York.

XI

KNOW THAT I AM GOD

Louis C. Wright

"Be still, and know that I am God: . . . The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."—*Psa. 46. 10, 11.*

In the hour of bereavement there is nothing that we can do and nothing that we need to do but to wait quietly with reverent faith in God and with tender affection for our beloved dead. There are no particular rites or ceremonies which must be performed to make our loved ones safe in the hands of God or fittingly to honor them when they are gone. With friends about us and God with us we face the facts of life and death with fearlessness and with radiant hope. The God who across the ages has cared for the hosts of men and women and children as they went into the unseen world is here with us. Be still before him and know that he is God. Life and death and life that is to be are in his hands.

In the circle of sorrow where heaven and earth, time and eternity seem to meet, we realize how futile are all human words and human thoughts. And yet, being often in its quiet presence, I grow less and less afraid of death; more and more sure of life. Since the tragic days in France when I moved among the graves of tens of thousands of young men, gone to untimely death, I have tried to answer some questions for my own peace of mind.

We face the fact that our Creator has deliberately planned that every one of us shall one day pass out by this gate. Death can be no surprise and no calamity to our Maker—no more than birth. And God does not blunder—has not blundered in making death a part of our life. God simply must have meanings for life beyond death which we have only glimpsed and guessed. Otherwise death could not be a part of that world order which he has ordained.

There is an old Chinese proverb, "If we could see more clearly, would we not more often smile when the saint goes home and weep when the child is born, rather than smiling when the child is born and weeping when the mature life goes home?" Whether or not this be the right view, it cannot be that a good God who has deliberately planned for us all to die can feel toward death as we usually do.

As we try to look at it from God's viewpoint we cannot but feel that the essential life of a good person can never be buried in any grave of earth. We may say over the body, "Earth to earth, dust to dust," because that body has been built of earthly substance. But we cannot say, "Dust to dust" concerning the ideals and virtues and affections. We are godlike, not because we have physical bodies but because we have creative minds and wills and spiritual life. And that which is godlike does not belong to the realms of dust and of death, but to life. Life does not cease simply because the body returns to the earth. We stand with the light of abounding life glistening in our tears and cry, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

For God has made us, not to die, but to live—to pass through death to released life. One cannot see how ideals, memories, affections, mental habits and moral virtues can greatly change because the bodily mechanism fails and turns again to dust.

Hosmer has it:

"I cannot think of them as dead,
Who walk with me no more;
Along the path of life I tread
They have but gone before.

"The Father's house is mansioned fair
Beyond my vision dim;
All souls are his, and here or there
Are living unto him.

"And still their silent ministry
Within my heart hath place,
As when on earth they walked with me
And met me face to face.

"Their lives are made forever mine;
What they to me have been
Hath left henceforth its seal and sign
Engraven deep within.

"Mine are they by an ownership
Nor time nor death can free;
For God hath given to Love to keep
Its own eternally."

God does not seem to be greatly concerned as to how many years we live in the flesh. But God and man are tremendously concerned as to how we live and the substance of our spiritual beings.

> “He most lives, who thinks most, feels
> the noblest, acts the best.”
>
> —*Bailey.*

For such our God must have meanings of life beyond death that we have but dimly pictured.

Another question is the heart-breaking “why” of grief and sorrow. And my answer has come to be a frank statement that I am glad we can feel sorrow. Sorrow is the child of love. Had we no love and no loved ones, we would have no sorrow. The saddest funerals are not those where there is real grief and even heartbreak. The saddest are those where no one sorrows because no one cares enough to be grieved. God can comfort sorrow, but even God is helpless where love is absent.

> “ ’Tis better to have loved and lost
> Than never to have loved at all.”

For love can sweeten sorrow and build an inner shrine where our loved ones abide when death has done its worst. And so, while giving to grieving ones our deepest sympathy, we also rejoice with them that they have possessed one who has so won and shared their love.

Surely, too, in permitting sorrow, God does not mean it to blight our lives and clothe us with gloom. If we will have it so, God can help us make our hardest experiences the greatest building forces in our lives. Too often have I seen faith strengthened, sympathies widened, love sweetened, and circumstances conquered through inner calm and poise, to believe that sorrow is only a dark, dread enemy to men. As in the darkest nights we see the distant, steady stars more clearly, so in grief do we see the lights of life that time cannot dim nor death destroy. As in a storm the ship drives faster than in the calm, if we but hold the rudder right, so does the soul progress through necessary pain and darkness to a peace that passeth all understanding. We are hammered into shape on the anvils of life's testing experiences more than we are coddled into character by ease.

"If, on a quiet sea,
Toward heaven we calmly sail,
With grateful hearts, O God, to thee,
We'll own the favoring gale.

"But should the surges rise,
And rest delay to come,
Blest be the tempest, kind the storm,
Which drives us nearer home."

Often we are driven by the storms of grief toward the true home of the soul and the harbors of abiding peace. It is one of the master achievements of a lifetime to have learned that at the very center of earthly turmoil "God is our refuge and strength." This must be what Jesus meant, "Let not your heart be troubled: . . . my peace I give unto you."

We gather together in the quiet places of death, not so much because our loved ones die as because they have lived. Had they lived less, our loss would be less. When those who have lived great, good lives go out, we grieve for the loss that is ours, but we are sure of their gain. We feel them safe in God's care when we could intrust them to no other hands with confidence. Having learned to be at home with God any time, anywhere, they are at home with him for all time, everywhere.

> "God of the living, in whose eyes
> Unveiled thy whole creation lies!
> All souls are thine; we must not say
> That those are dead who pass away;
> From this our world of flesh set free,
> We know them living unto thee."
> —*Ellerton.*

Do we not dare to believe that? For surely God has made us for life; not for death. In a God's world, life must be greater than death; and love is greater than all.

With sweet sorrow in our hearts may we live so well that when we pass there shall be many who feel true sorrow, because they love us much. And when the sun sets and we lay down the tools of our earthly toil and turn our faces homeward, may there be rest and peace at eventide. For if we live enough, no death can kill, no grave can hold us. The Pilot waits across the bar, not for worn-out bodies, but for triumphant spirits.

XII

VICTORY

STEPHEN H. MAHON

"Thanks . . . victory."—*1 Cor. 15. 57.*

"IF a man die" is as old as grief and as new as the last great sorrow of the human heart.

Many there are who through training and faith approach the question with no doubt, to whom death itself is only one more of the things which God has prepared. It carries no terrors. Others there are who in the hour of sorrow and trial have no adequate answer to the question "if a man die," and are left with troubled and fearful minds. Are faith and hope a sentiment or a sacrament? Even if Jesus arose from the dead, is it not so isolated and unparalleled an event as to be meaningless to us? How does life here relate itself to the future? What is the basis of Paul's "Thanks . . . Victory"?

Our faith and hope are not dependent upon sentiment, singing ourselves into a state of mind. Our religious faith is built on doctrines which we believe. The biologist is convinced there is such a thing as life; he assumes it and works on that assumption. The chemist is convinced there is such a thing as an atom; he assumes it and works on that assumption. Jesus Christ lived and taught on the assumption of life, now and forever. The Christian belief in Christ's teaching of eternal life is a doctrine of the church.

Doctrines, like character, are known by their fruits. The Christian doctrine of belief in eternal life has given marvelous recuperative power to faith and vigor. It impressed its likeness on Saint Francis and Chinese Gordon, and on an innumerable host. The belief has not been in vain but has left its mark indelibly imprinted on the character of Christian civilization.

Paul said, "If Christ be not risen, then is . . . your faith vain." But, argues Paul, it has not been in vain. Therefore Thanks! Victory!

Again, is Christ's resurrection from the dead an isolated and unparalleled thing?

The whole idea is changed when we know what Christ himself thought and taught about eternal life.

Jesus' whole emphasis was upon life, life now and forever. To him the important thing was life. His promise was not that if we attained a fortitude that would weather the disappointments and sorrows here, we would be rewarded later by eternal life. It was life now, buoyant, victorious, that is eternal in its nature. It was as if he said, "Why postpone your good time until after your funeral?" O. O. McIntyre significantly says that of all the letters he receives, the happiest are from those engaged in religious work.

Our never-sleeping consciousness is one side of us. Our bodies furnish the other side. In consciousness lies character. Eternal life begins when man begins to live his divinity, which is the higher side of his character.

If you have risen to the height where you know God in his world, in your own life and the lives of others, then you know your own immortality. So, when a man begins to live—that is, to love, to deny himself, and to serve—he understands what life is and knows that death cannot touch him. He has his answer to "if a man die." He can cry out with Paul, "Thanks . . . Victory!"

An essay by George Brandes on "Life" is significant. He says that life is a tower with one hundred steps, one for each year. If you arrive at the hundredth step, it collapses and you fall to your death; but few attain to the hundredth step; most fall along the way, it may be at the twentieth or at the sixty-third. In climbing, the beginning is fast and easy; later on it is slower and more difficult. As you climb you look through loopholes, and in the beginning you are filled with great interest because the sights are so new. Later on there is less interest because the sights are old. Under this tower there is a pit-shaft into which you may descend. Here there are galleries, where other men have dug; here are to be found riches, and here you may find your work. When you do, you find relief from the misfortunes of life, and you give no thought to the day when your work will cease. Rather, like Archimedes of old, you are so lost in your task that you wave away those who come to carry you to your death, saying, "Do not disturb my circles."

How many we have known who have lived, loved, sacrificed, and served their day and generation and, like David, have fallen asleep! These are they to whom life has meant work, faithfully and lovingly performed, and who leave their work with the words of Paul on their lips, "Thanks . . . Victory!"

How does life here relate itself to the future? Already we have seen that the basis of our hope is through homology—our natures corresponding to the nature of God.

This nature is spirit. The significance of life is summed up in one formula. The whole world is the expression of Spirit. The world exists to grow souls.

The hope of the future is not a scientific question, for science can deal only with matter; to attempt to demonstrate degrades it to the level of the common. You may know a stone, but you can't weigh love.

God's appeal to our faith in this last and greatest of life's adventures is made wholly on the highest basis which the human heart knows—that of trust. Not by calculation or coercion, and not by external evidence, but by the highest test of love: trust, by trusting him. This is living by the noblest hypothesis man knows.

Paul's determination to trust Christ's revelation of God is Paul's "risen with Christ," and called from him his "Thanks . . . Victory!"

In my city there appeared recently the accounts of two deaths. One was that of a man who had made prominent his atheism. The other was that of Dean Edward I. Bosworth, of Oberlin. A reporter who attended the funeral of the atheist gave the following account: "He denied God, denied the existence of one who in the thought of the religious stands like a beacon against the mysteries of life and death. No word of that God passed the lips of the friend who delivered a brief eulogy. He offered an atheist's dole of solace to the mourners, bidding them look upon the laws of nature and be content with death."

Among the many tender and beautiful tributes to Dean Bosworth was this consummate characterization: "I have been trying to tell you of him, but it cannot be done. If I could have introduced you to him as he gathered up his books after class, he would have smiled and you would have walked away saying as another friend said, "Now I know the meaning of eternal life!"

Newell Dwight Hillis, writing on immortality, said: "When Christ came into the world, he found death the king of terrors; he left it only the king of mysteries. He found the grave a black point which vanished into nothingness; he left it a golden cloud behind which God and the soul meet in an eternal friendship. He found death set forth by the skull and the cross-bones, the skeleton and the scythe; he left it an event so victorious that earth's most beautiful flowers are not sweet enough to garland the glorious event called dying. He found it with one song; it was a dirge, and he turned it into a symphony; with one record, a slab with an epitaph upon it; he left instead a gate of pearl; with one color, black, he turned it to gold; and for the skeleton he substituted an angel, who whispered, 'He is not here; he is risen.' "

XIII

THE GOD OF ALL COMFORT

James L. Gardiner

"Blessed be God . . . the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation."—*2 Cor. 1. 3-4.*

"After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven."—*Matt. 6. 9.*

"Ye believe in God, believe also in me."—*John 14. 1.*

The great need of the human heart is God. In every religion, no matter how crude, no matter how strange, there has been the idea of God and that somehow man was related to the Divine Being. This was true of the Jewish religion and is pre-eminently true of Christianity.

What is the character of the God revealed to us by the words and by the life of Jesus? Is he a God who can strengthen us in the hour of affliction and make the bitter waters of life sweet? Is he a God who can bind up hearts that are broken and bring comfort to the sorrowing?

I

I answer with confidence and on the authority of Jesus, Yes—for the God of Christ is our heavenly Father. He is the one to whom we can lift up our hearts and in our deepest sorrow or saddest bereavement, pray, "Our Father which art in heaven."

Jesus taught us that the biggest and best word for "God" was not Divine Architect of the Universe, nor Creator, nor Governor of the World, but Father. The doctrine of the Fatherhood of God is a doctrine that differentiates Christianity from every other religion in the world, for no teacher of religion, save Christ, ever taught that all men, whether black or white, rich or poor, might look up into the Divine face and pray, "Our Father."

We have heard so much about our sin and our shame that sometimes it seems easier to believe that we belong to the devil than to God, easier to believe that we belong to the earth than to the skies. Nevertheless this is the teaching of Christ—we are all God's children. He numbers the hairs of our head and not a sparrow falleth to the ground without his notice.

A noted agnostic once wrote: "I cannot see one shadow or tittle of evidence that the great Unknown stands in the relation of a Father—loves us and cares for us as Christianity asserts." Alas, this agnostic looked in the wrong place. He looked into "Nature, red in tooth and claw," and found his answer there. But we have looked into the words and life of Christ, and with him can still pray in the hour of deepest grief, "Our Father which art in heaven."

With Whittier we can sing:

"Yet, in the maddening maze of things,
And tossed by storm and flood,
To one fixed trust my spirit clings;
I know that God is good!

. . . . .

"I know not what the future hath
Of marvel or surprise,
Assured alone that life and death
His mercy underlies.

. . . . .

"And so beside the Silent Sea
I wait the muffled oar;
No harm from him can come to me
On ocean or on shore.

"I know not where his islands lift
Their fronded palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond his love and care."

II

The God of Christ is a God of love. Jesus summed up his religion in the words, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

In the ages before the coming of Christ men thought and spoke of the omnipotence of God. They spoke of his omnipresence and his omniscience, but these ideas of God attracted few worshipers. Then, nineteen hundred years ago, Jesus came into the world to teach men the true nature and character of God.

One day, I can imagine, Jesus sat with his disciples about him. There was a lull in the blessed conversation and John looked up into the eyes of the Christ and said, "O Master, tell us who and what God is." There was a silence and then Jesus spoke that word which the ages were waiting to hear, "God is love." To reveal this great truth of God, Jesus came in the flesh, and when he had lived his life and was about to die on the cross, he said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

I know a preacher who served a church for five years. It was his first pastorate. There was a family that was especially kind to him. They had an only daughter. The time came when this preacher left this charge and went to another three hundred miles away. One sad day, a few years later, he received a telegram from his former parishioner stating that his daughter was dead. In reply the preacher sent a telegram, and then later wrote a letter expressing his sympathy. He looked at the telegram; he looked at the letter. They both seemed too cold. He took his grip in his hand and started for the station and came in person to the home of that bereaved family. I was there when he arrived. I saw him throw his arm about the father who had lost his daughter, and although this preacher man spoke not, yet his friend knew that he loved him. He had come in the flesh.

So it was with God. He wrote letters and sent messages telling the world of his love, but men did not seem to understand the loving character of the good and great God. Hence, in the fullness of time, God sent his Son, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." And then men knew as they looked into the face and life of Christ that no one comes into the world God-hated, but all are born divinely loved.

Charles H. Spurgeon was passing one day through the country when he saw the words, "God is love" written on the weather-vane on the top of a farmer's barn. "What do you mean?" Mr. Spurgeon inquired of the farmer. "Do you mean God changes every time the wind blows?" "No," said the man. "I mean God loves us no matter which way the wind blows." This is the Christlike God revealed by the words and by the life of Jesus; and this is the kind of a God we need to strengthen and to hearten us in the hour of our bereavement.

III

The God of Jesus and of Paul is a God of comfort. Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, said, "Blessed be God . . . the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation."

The problem of suffering is a universal problem. No one can escape it. "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." It is an ancient problem. Job faced it in the long ago. Job was one of earth's saints who lived in the early twilight of God's revelation to man. He was sore troubled. He was wealthy, but he lost his wealth. He had a family of beautiful children, but he lost them one and all. He was strong and robust, but he lost his health. He had a wife and friends, but he lost their sympathy. His heart was broken.

Where could he go? To whom could he flee for comfort? Who could heal his broken heart? Who could satisfy his soul and bring peace to his troubled breast? There was only One, and that One was God. Hence, turning away from human sympathy and help, he raised the cry that through all centuries has come from the heart of man—"O that I knew where I might find him!"

To-day we are confronted with the same problem that Job faced centuries and centuries ago. Why, if God be Father, is the world full of pain? Why, if God be love, do the innocent suffer? Why is it that in this world we have tribulation? Why are our loved ones taken from us, sometimes so suddenly that they have scarcely time to say good-bye? Why are these pathetic lines of Longfellow so sadly true?—

"There is no flock, however watched and tended,
    But one dead lamb is there!
There is no fireside, howso'er defended,
    But has one vacant chair."

These are vital questions which touch every human heart, and we can but say there is One and, only one, who can help us solve the problem of human suffering. There is only one who can bring light out of darkness; there is only one who can heal the heart that is broken by grief or who can bring peace to the troubled soul. And that one is God—the God of whom Paul spoke when he said, "Blessed be God . . . the God of all comfort."

I commend you to this God of all comfort. He is a God who never fails. He did not fail Christ. He did not fail Paul. He did not fail our fathers and mothers, and he will not fail you.

When Moses was about to bid a final farewell to the Israelites, he said to them, "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." These words form one of the finest expressions of faith to be found anywhere in the language or literature of men. They were true when they were first uttered. They are true to-day. They will be true always. "The eternal God is thy refuge." Have faith in him. Jesus, speaking to his disciples on that sad and tragic night in which he was betrayed, said, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." That is what we need to-day—faith in the God revealed by Christ, faith to believe that "He remembereth his children," and that "all things work together for good to them that love God."

"Not now but in the coming years,
It may be in the better land,
We'll read the meaning of our tears
And there, sometime, we'll understand."

Somebody has well said, "I feel that if I can believe in God, I shall have all I need." How true this is! To believe in God is the sublimest and most comforting fact in all the world.

May we have the faith of Alfred Lord Tennyson, who, when the sands of his life were slipping out, wrote:

"Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea,

. . . .

"For though from out our bourne of
Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crossed the bar."

XIV

THE GREAT ASSURANCE

George A. Buttrick

"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."—*Romans 8. 38, 39.*

Here is optimism like a peal of bells—and it has its rational belief: Nothing can "separate us from the love of God." And here is a man willing to bet his life—and more—on the assertion. "This," he says in effect, "is my soul's conviction. Range against it whatever foe you may, the conviction stands. I am persuaded." To save us the trouble he proceeds to marshal all possible foes. It is a comprehensive list: "neither death, nor life" (the enemies of mortal experience), "nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers" (whatever spirits kind or unkind may be in earth or air), "nor things present, nor things to come" (all the enemies of time), "nor height, nor depth" (all the enemies of space)—and then to make sure he has reckoned every conceivable antagonism, he flings in the rest of creation known or unknown as if it were a trinket: "nor any other creature." Not all these singly or united can separate us from the love of God. "I will bet my soul against anything you can think or name that God holds us in eternal compassion"! That is a faith worth preaching about! . . .

Look a little more closely at this catalogue of the enemies of the soul's conviction:

Death—first on the list! Death driving an iron wedge into our strange human journey! Yes, but the wedge is driven between body and spirit, not between the spirit and God. The body goes; it is only a little bundle of sodium, iron, sugar and potassium, worth in material values slightly less than a dollar. Tell this man Paul that chemicals to the value of a dollar have changed their form; tell him there is nothing left but that; tell him that is the whole story.

He will shudder a little at the blasphemy, and then he will smile at the folly. There is a Power slightly stronger than death!

"Nor life"—well, life is a worse enemy than death. It has more skill to separate us from God. It has poverty, it has sorrows, it has sins. But Paul has tried life through and through—all its poverty, all its sorrows, some of its sins. "And," he tells us, "the anchor holds—holds, despite all that life can do."

"Angels, nor principalities, nor powers."—In Paul's day men believed that the air was filled with demons. If a man was sick, it was because a demon had possessed him. For us the demons have disappeared, but not the demoniac moods which so easily beset us. We wake one morning with our whole mind given to goodness, and before an hour has passed some mood or power from within or without has fallen like a shadow across our resolve, and "everything goes wrong." We are handed over to "the power of darkness," as Paul would say. But not all our baleful moods can break God's grip!

"Things present, nor things to come."

—Hamlet prayed to be freed from things present:

"To die, to sleep,
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heartache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to: 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished."

He wished to drown the ills of "things present"—or would have wished, had he not been more afraid of "things to come";

"For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil
Must give us pause. There's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life."

But Paul was not afraid either of things present or things to come.

"Nor height, nor depth."—Where will death carry us? "I do not know," says Paul, "nor do I need to know. It will not carry us away from the love of God. Whatever may betide God stands sure!" "I am convinced that nothing can separate us from his love."

All of which is magnificent—if we can trust it. But it sounds too much like a peroration, doesn't it?—like the grand but empty climax of a speech—the final bombast of some religious rhetoric—a "worked-up" spasm. When we read it we feel like saying in the words of one of Shakespeare's characters:

"What means this passionate discourse,
This peroration with such circumstances?"

It is so easy in the heat of language to say more than we actually feel or know. Was this conviction of Paul's really put to the test, or was it the child of a sheltered and untroubled life?

That question is soon answered. Doctor Jowett once described the life of Paul as being like that Engleberg Road in the High Alps, where the traveler is guided by red splashes of paint on the jutting rocks. Paul's road was a red road. He suffered from bodily infirmity probably from his birth. And as for the sufferings which his faith brought on him—they almost sear the mind in the reading. Three times he was beaten with rods, five times flogged with thirty-nine stripes, three times shipwrecked, very often hungry and thirsty. Add to this record his mental tribulations—the treachery of friends, the venom of foes, the endless perplexities—and you have blackness rolling up like a tide. We call him famous, but he knew nothing of fame. The idea would have been funny. The pagan religions had temples, ritual, incense, a hierarchy of priests; but his religion had none of these, except what seemed a pitiful mummery with a few pieces of bread and a cup of wine. He had no backing of philosophers and princes; he had only the incredible story of a Malefactor done to death between two thieves, and coming out of a grave to judge mankind. Men laughed at Paul, and then tried to kill him because he stirred up trouble and ruined business.

This is the man who says, "I am persuaded." His words are no rhetoric. If ever a man's convictions were put to the test, this is the man. He endured agonies in fact which we could hardly bear in infancy. Somehow he had thrust his hand through the agony and found another Hand and greater: "The love of God," he calls it.

We want to share such conviction. But how can we? How can we know this love of God?

To which the answer seems to be at first, that we *do* know God's love. We accept it when we are children as naturally as we accept the light. A Chinese girl, on hearing of Jesus for the first time, said: "I have always known him, and now I know his name." We have always known God, and he has a thousand names. He is the Spirit All-Wise and All-Mighty and All-Loving —and he gathers our follies, our weaknesses, our half-compassions unto himself and completes them. He is Tennyson's God:

"That which we dare invoke to bless,
Our dearest faith, our ghastliest doubt;
He, They, One, All, Within, Without,
The Power in darkness whom we guess."

In childhood he is our "dearest faith"; later he becomes for many people "our ghastliest doubt." But sometimes he becomes the Fact of facts. In Donald Hankey's *A Student in Arms* there is the story of a soldier desperately wounded, who rolled over in the long grass between the lines. He throbbed with pain, and felt himself growing weak through loss of blood. Finally, in sheer weariness, he fell asleep. When he awoke, he could see the stars, and as he was lying there the sky began to speak to him of Eternity and Great Power. Then into his tired mind there came the old phrase with a new meaning: "Underneath are the everlasting arms."

"God," he whispered softly. "God everywhere!" He sighed contentedly, as a tired child, and the phrase went on repeating itself in his brain in a kind of chant—"Underneath are the everlasting arms."

Nothing seemed to matter except *that.* The arms of God were round the world, round all worlds; round the foolish war—a strife among God's children; round life, round death. The Great Compassion was there near him, within him.

Now, you have had such experiences, though perhaps in manner less clear. Strangely enough, they have not come in the sunlit stretches of the road as often as when life seemed too much for you. You know how the experience has come for you. It is your secret. You spoil it if you talk too much about it. Some hour of almost fatal sickness—a loved one slipping away from you, so that you had to pray for your love's sake; and God in that prayer! Some hour of broken shame, with no companion but your shame—until God came in that wreck and loneliness! I heard the other day a strange story of undeserved misfortunes dogging a man, until he almost cried out in his bitterness on "This God of love the churches talk about." But all the time there was a sense of something lacking. Was God lacking? Now he has decided that he must make his vow of allegiance to God revealed in Christ! God comes in strange ways. You know how God has come to you.

Do I speak clearly? It is in just such experiences that we begin to know what Paul calls "the love of God." That love is often overlaid in our lives with doubts or denials, but it is there. It is part of life itself.

So it begins, but it does not reach its fullness until we see Jesus. Mark carefully: "the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Our experience is chequered, and shows the love of God in alternating gleams and shadows. And the world of nature bears no clear testimony. I know a river in northern Michigan which flows between walls of pine trees fretted against a golden sky. Sometimes it flows in limpid smoothness, and sometimes it tumbles over the rocks in a merry turbulence. To live with that river is to know the healing motherhood of earth. But press back a short distance through those pine trees: you find cultivated land, if such it can be called. Stubborn roots impede the ground. Heavy bowlders obstruct the plow. There is sand only an inch or two beneath the soil. Nature there seems not a mother, but an enemy bent on wresting from the settlers their scanty living. The first settlers have long since left. There is a village up there called Advance—a name eloquent of the hopes of the pioneer. But the "advance" has been stopped; it consists of two houses, one store, and a wide place in the road. Nature is sometimes seeming kind, and sometimes seeming cruel. . . .

"Herein we know the love of God that Christ died for us."

Yes! We behold him

> "how he walked here,
> The shadow of him love, the speech of him
> Soft music, and his step a benediction."

We see the heavy-laden find peace in him. We see sinners—passion-ridden people like Mary Magdalene, and coldly avaricious people like Matthew the taxgatherer—receive pardon at his lips and heart. We see him making his will like steel to go to a cross. We see him led away to die, the torches of the soldiers making strange shadow-patterns on the trees. We see him on the cross praying for the men who were murdering him—praying for Pilate, the shifty politician, for Judas with his bloodstained money in his hand, for the legionaries who marched him to the Hill, for the scribes who mocked him, for the crowd who stood and gaped. "Father, forgive them; they don't realize. If they did, they wouldn't do it." We see him living on after death in the affections of his followers—living on in marvelous power; in marvelous power to this day. We see him! and the "love of God" in us stands at salute! There is the kindness we have dimly felt. We had said Life meant Goodness to all mankind: there is the Goodness made flesh! We have seen him—human flesh divinely fair—and we know! Neither life nor death, nor the demons of the upper air could break his love for men. Verily, God was in him reconciling the world unto himself!

But that was not all: not even the revelation clear in Jesus of a love dimly felt in his life would have brought this conviction to Paul. There was one other thing—Paul lived the life! Say that Jesus is the Hand thrust through the mystery of experience to prove God: the Hand must be grasped! Say that the Sun of Compassion has risen in him: the door must be unbarred and the windows opened wide, before that Risen Sun can save us! Say that Jesus is the Master of the hearts of men: we must take him for Master even as the oldtime serfs in noble words took their vows of loyalty: "Dear my Lord, I am liege man of thine for life and limb and earthly regard, and I will be true to thee in life and death, so help me God."

Full conviction tarries for that full commitment. This persuasion is not built on a theory or an emotion; it is built on a life lived. "I caught myself wishing," Paul writes, "that I might be accursed from Christ for my brethren's sake." Think of it! What do we catch ourselves wishing? Suppose we suddenly surprised ourselves in the hidden motive, what would it be? "I caught myself wishing that I might be accursed from Christ if only I might go on living his life"—which is mixed, but radiantly, redeemingly mixed! He began with a Love dimly felt—as we all begin. He found that Love made flesh in Jesus and verified. He proved it by the test of living. So he reached a conviction that was unshakable. "I am persuaded," he says. He says it quietly; there is no need for him to rave. Rhetoric to declare that no flood could overwhelm this persuasion? Nay, every flood had swept over him, but God was still true.

Nothing "can separate." Life is made up of separations. We are separated from youth, from the maturity of our powers, from our loved ones. The very marriage service cannot escape the fact of separation: "to love and to cherish until death us do part." But there is a Love which defies all separation, and in which all we have lost is treasured for us: I am persuaded that nothing "can separate us from the Love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

XV

THE EVERLASTING ARMS

William Hiram Foulkes

"Underneath are the everlasting arms."—*Deut. 33. 27.*

Is there anything underneath? Beneath the fretting of the waves is there an untroubled deep? Beneath the crumbling, shifting sand is there an adamantine rock? Beneath and behind the things that seem to be is there the reality of that which eternally is? Because people have been asking these questions through the ages and answering them affirmatively we have religion. The human conviction that there is something underneath is so nearly universal that it becomes as authoritative as reason or experience. Our opinions and beliefs may differ widely in their content and in their assurance, yet there is a mysterious unity binding them together.

What is underneath? What is the nature

of the untroubled deep which underlies the fretting waves? What is the adamantine rock that stands firm beneath the crumbling, shifting sands? What is the reality that hides but also abides behind the outward form of things? Further, what is our relation to that reality? How may we come into contact with it, become conscious of its reality and link ourselves to its power? What is underneath?

The most common, persistent, and plausible answer is that the universe itself is underneath. Call it life or reality, power or purpose, material or spirit, here it is, still standing, safe and secure. Astronomers may tell us that millions of years hence suns and stars will turn to cinders, but, according to this practical view, why should we be concerned? The universe will far outlast our need of it. Let us take it as we find it, rest ourselves as completely as we may in its embrace, taking pains not to antagonize its order by needless rebellion or, on the other hand, to capitulate too quickly to its irksome demands! In other words, let us take a "safe and sane" view of things. It was this attitude which characterized some of the views expressed by the writer of the book of Ecclesiastes. "Be not righteous over much!"

It would not be too much to say that this first answer to the question "What is underneath?" is widely characterized as the common-sense answer. "Why speculate concerning insoluble mysteries?" we are asked. Why not take things as we find them, get as much personal and collective satisfaction out of them as we may, and when our time comes to "shuffle off this mortal coil," do it with calmness and even a degree of satisfaction, saying, as it were, "Good-by universe, I'm glad I've met you!"

Yes, it is a plausible, popular answer, but it will stand no strain. Under the guise of matter-of-fact common sense it is in reality as thin and unsubstantial as the gossamer threads of fancy, of which stuff dreams are made. It may do as the jaunty answer of one who has no deep-seated longings, no imperious desires, no unfulfilled ideals, no unfinished tasks, no unrequited loves. It is because the universe which we are asked to take for granted has an uncomfortable way of collapsing about us that we are unable to believe that the things of the present palpable order are the only realities that are underneath. How swiftly and irresistibly calamity comes! A loved one in the fair-flush of morning vigor, and at night a pallid mold of clay! Tranquillity of mind and ease of heart at sunrise, and by the time the shadows have turned on the dial, irreparable loss and bitter grief!

Unemployment, disease, and accident, the swift flight of riches, the misunderstanding of friends and the willful antagonism of foes —all of these shatter the pretensions of our so-called practical views of life and show what a hollow mockery it is. The universe as it is, without some spiritual key to unlock its mysteries, some lever to guide its pent-up forces, is only illusion and final disaster.

A second answer confronts us. It is the hopeful word heralded by the voice of reverent science. Power is underneath. Power not without purpose! Power that girds itself with chosen ends and that moves forward steadfastly toward those goals of desire and striving! Power is underneath. Under the friendly hand of science one may fearlessly explore the vast domain of stored-up and unlocked resources, which are available to all who will enter and possess them. What can man not accomplish with his skillful fingers, his masterful hands, his tireless arms, his indomitable spirit? While the ancients had their skills and their crafts, some of which, for all our superior knowledge, we have not been able to match or even restore, for the most part we have outstripped the ages. We make nature capitulate to our decrees. Architecture, industry, and transportation, to say nothing of a dozen other vast branches of modern business enterprise, have remade the world. The fields and forests, the mines and the waters of the whole world pour out their immense treasures for us daily and hourly. There is scarcely a device calculated to minister to human comfort that has not been fabricated. New facilities even crowd ahead of our need, not to say our mastery of them. Power! How wonderful it is! Yes, but how terrible too! How wonderful it is to have a huge car at one's command capable of going eighty or even one hundred miles an hour! How terrible when a drunken fool has his hand upon the wheel and when undisciplined power plows a devastating way through defenseless people! At times, in our mad moments, it almost seems as though the Hand at the universal throttle were drunken. If power is all that is underneath, our plight is desperate.

Then comes the answer of Philosophy. Like her fair sister Science, she reminds us that there is something more than material resource underneath. She adds her heartening word, "It is the word of truth." Wisdom is underneath; not merely power which might terrify and overawe us, but wisdom to conciliate and reassure. She traces the delicate carvings of order and design in the tiny "flower in the crannied wall" and finds in large pattern the same exquisite tracings in the far-away stars. She weaves out of the threads of the scattered and diversified sciences the fabric of a masterful unity. She discovers plan and purpose, an end in view and appropriate means for the accomplish-ment of that end. She bids us attune our ears to a universal symphony in which the whole creation joins, flowers and stars alike.

> "In reason's ear they all rejoice,
> And utter forth a glorious voice;
> Forever singing as they shine,
> 'The hand that made us is divine.' "

And yet, and yet! How wise it is, but how foolish we are! How consistent its purposes, how fickle ours! How intricate and delicate the tracings of its designs! How frequently blunted and marred are our blundering lives! Is wisdom wise enough to compass us and our folly? Is the wisdom that is underneath able to resolve the mystery that engulfs us who tread life's surface ways?

Then ethics makes its answer—goodness is underneath. Not merely power and wisdom, but righteousness and love. The foundations of the universe are not merely laid in the deep hidings of power and undergirded with steel structured wisdom, they are cemented by understanding love. Compassion, mercy, pity, loving-kindness are all a part of the essential "underneath." Just as a true earthly father is fundamentally kindness and care as well as hands and feet, so does the universe stand forth upon the sure foundation of righteousness, which, when love illumines it, becomes eternal goodness. Yes,

> "In the maddening maze of things
> Tossed by storm and flood,
> To one fixed stake my spirit clings—
> I know that God is good."

We cannot blink the fact of evil. Hideous, spectral ills stalk all our mortal feasts. "Man's inhumanity to man" still makes its countless "thousands mourn." Yet goodness and the soul's confidence in it strangely and strongly persist. Both good and ill are here. Which is underneath? In the moments of pessimism to which we are all prone, or in the dark hour of cynicism, that unrelieved and unfathomable abyss of negation, we are tempted to doubt the primacy of goodness. Then when the brief bitter moment is gone and the dark hour is over past, we know that goodness is inalienable. We assume it and rest ourselves upon it.

We never try to explain it, as we continually seek to unfathom the mystery of evil. It is the reality of goodness and, not its mystery, that moves us and grips us.

Has not the last word been said? Power and wisdom and goodness—these three are underneath! What more could one desire or have? Just this one thing—to possess some tangible form in which these great realities might clothe themselves, so that as they draw near to us they might be clearly discerned and understandingly laid hold of. Then speaks the voice of religion: "Underneath are the everlasting arms." Power is there, limitless and available! Wisdom too, for every past, present, and future emergency! Goodness also, ready to supply our every want! The human arm is the perfect symbol of power. With its masterful hand and its skillful fingers it controls the mighty world about us. When you have traced your steel structured civilization back to its first release of power you have found a human arm. The tiller of the field, the artisan in the mines, the toiler in the factory, the artificer on the skyscraper, all of these through the symbol of the arm disclose to us the meaning of power.

It is so also with wisdom. The surgeon's skillful fingers, the masterful strokes of the artist's brush, the glorious design of the draughtsman's pencil are all betokened by the human arm.

It is trebly so with goodness. The most perfect picture of love that one could ever hope to paint is the portrait of a first-born child in its mother's arms.

That is why the Christian finds his comfort and confidence in the person of his Saviour and Master. He sees in the incarnation of the living God in the Bethlehem manger a manifestation of the eternal and divine in the form of our mortal humanity, "bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh." He sees in the earthly life and ministry of that One the everlasting arms of compassion and mercy thrown about the erring and the lost. He beholds in the outstretched arms of Jesus upon his cross the everlasting arms of God put underneath the world's weight of woe. He watches the universe "tumble in" upon the crucified Saviour and then beholds him bursting forth through the gates of death, with a glorified human nature, "the first-born of many brethren." He is willing to face trouble and grief, calamity, and even disaster, in the name and spirit of Jesus. In the hour of his trial he feels underneath his struggling soul the everlasting arms of infinite power, omniscient wisdom, unchangeable goodness, and unsearchable love. As he asks himself the age-long question of ancient Job, "If a man die, shall he live again?" he hears the answers that have been echoing down the years. "He *may* live again," says Science. A grain of wheat dies, but the harvest field is ablaze with life. The caterpillar dies, but the butterfly bursts forth. Man may live again; he may not. "Man *wants* to live again," says Philosophy. He stretches out to larger realities than he can yet compass. He dreams of and desires a kingdom that has not yet come. He hopes to live again.

"Man *ought* to live again," says Conscience. There are too many wrongs unrighted, too many goodnesses unrewarded, too many tangled threads of sacrifice yet unwoven into the fabric of reality. He ought to live again.

"He *shall* live again," says Jesus. Love is stronger than death. "God is not the God of the dead, but the living." "I am the resurrection, and the life." "Because I live, ye shall live also!"

Come unto him, men and women in your bewildering griefs, and he will give you rest. Take his yoke upon you and learn of him, for he is meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls, for his yoke is easy and his burden is light.

"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."

XVI

WHO ARE THE DEAD?

Charles W. Brashares

The minister had scarcely reached for the doorbell when the door swung open before him and a motherly woman, with eyes red from weeping, greeted him and motioned him to a chair.

"Sit there, please. You are in a hurry, I know. I'll tell you my trouble at once. My little child died. You didn't know Evelyn, but here are her pictures. Wasn't she darling in that one! See the red cheeks. Oh, my darling baby, dead! I can't stand it to think of it."

The visitor looked at the pictures, but before he could speak, the mother continued: "I have other children, but none like her. She seemed actually heavenly; with her I felt lifted up to heights of love. I feel it yet, sometimes; and she seems to be with me again. She was so sweet and dimpled and lovely, and she talked about God. Then she caught cold and died without any reason whatsoever. Explain that. I must have help. My husband lives by faith. He says these things cannot be explained. But I am an educated woman and I must have help—something to think about. I have struggled by myself through the months ever since Evelyn died and I'm losing hold of myself. My mind feels as if I were driving eighteen horses, and I can't hold them—they are running off with me. See these books. I have read them all, but they have not helped. What can I do? My little one is dead."

The minister pondered a moment. That question had faced him so many times. Then he began, sympathetically:

"Has it ever occurred to you that you and I might be the dead?"

"Just what do you mean?" she asked.

"Just that. We are the dead. Your little Evelyn is with the living," he went on.

"I wish I could believe it."

"You can hardly help but believe it. Surely, you do not believe Christ is dead because they buried his body. He simply was glorified with that glory he had before he came here. Some of us believe that somewhere there is a glorious universe of celestial souls. But we who fell into spiritual sickness are born here. 'Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting.' We who have failed come here to this earthly hospital that we may be healed of our soul's diseases, and Christ is the Good Physician, as he said, and sometimes one of us goes joyously home from this hospital well again."

A strange light dawned on the mother's face as she began to understand.

Encouraged, the minister continued: "You realize, of course, that God created man originally in his own spiritual image. You and I may be sick souls, but let us not forget that we are of the household of God. All of earth together can never satisfy us. We are strangers on earth and cannot understand our surroundings here. Take, for instance, the way we read about crime in the newspapers. 'News,' they tell us, 'is something unusual.' But a child may begin to read about crime and he may continue to read about it for seventy years and it will still be unusual. He cannot get used to it. He cannot believe that human creatures will do such a thing as murder one another. Do you want a greater proof of the inherent goodness of the soul?"

"I understand," said the mother. "But if we are celestial creatures, why do we do such terrible things sometimes?"

"Because we are sick souls," the minister answered. "You can easily recognize our disease. It is lack of love for one another. Hostility is quite characteristic of us. We organize millions into armies to kill—whom? Anybody to be pointed out later. Though it astounds us that men will do it, we hang about the idea of killing as a man who despises drunkenness yet hangs about his cups. Even our peace conferences talk about war. Was it Franklin who told of the angel who came to see earth and alighted on a battleship in time of war? He watched the men slashing at one another along the deck so slippery with human blood; he heard the curses and groans and then watched men renew the attack. The angel surveyed the scene a moment and then remarked: 'I must have come to the wrong place. I sought earth, but this is hell.' Why is it that when we know war is hell, we try to make war, turn business into a conflict, politics into a cutthroat competition, and even split our religion into contending bodies? Something is wrong with us. The death of sin is pulling us down. Did not Jesus freely grant that the only real death was the hold of sin on us. And is not this the abiding place of sin so that sin and death are within us and around us here? No wonder the central teaching of our Lord was that we need to learn to love. Because we hate instead of love, we are sick spiritually."

And now the mother was pondering. "Many of us are sick souls, I know; but if we have learned to sin, what is there about earth that can cure us? Why do we need to be placed in this material world of pain and trouble at all?"

"Can't you see it?" asked the minister. "God's love sends us here to be cured. The material universe itself is created to teach us love and so help us back to spiritual health. Christ and nature are not in conflict. They co-operate as do a good physician and a good hospital. Look at human nature. Here is a young man. Nature drives him to seek the one girl in the world who is most apt to inspire him to love. They marry. There is a physical side to the relationship, but we know that from this intimacy there springs the beautiful flower of a spiritual comradeship. At least, within the man's selfishness two are included. And Christ, if given opportunity with such favorable circumstances, can teach much that is spiritual about love. Then from physical contacts come little children. Do they not teach parents something of love? Within the circle of the man's selfishness you have now a whole group who are breaking down his antagonisms and teaching him good will. Even the sufferings of his body should surely teach him sympathy for others. Because your body has known hunger, do you not have a tendency to sympathize with others who are hungry? Physical pains may make you spiritually tender toward others in pain. Our material needs give us a chance to help one another. I can shovel your snow and you can shovel mine, and so a friendship which is spiritual begins. The material world has been created more vividly to demonstrate the need we have of one another's love and kindness, and woe to him who does not learn the lesson here. Jesus used his most biting words against the Pharisees, who, on this earth, where our need of one another's help is so vividly symbolized, could go along a street lined with the sick and the starving, the sinning and the hopeless, without sympathy. If physical hunger will not teach a man to help the hungry, if Christ's spirit cannot move you who have pain here to sympathize with others who have pain, I wonder if there is any place anywhere in which you can learn the lesson better. Earth has been created as a hospital in which the Good Physician will have helpful surroundings for curing our sick souls."

The mother dried her eyes and spoke incredulously: "I suppose, then, you feel that my taking my little baby's body out and burying her is going to teach me sympathy and be good for my soul."

"Well, it has created a situation in which

God is going to help you take a new step forward if you will do so. Christ himself is the Physician. You know I think of him as of the sunshine whose presence cures disease. Take the little child with the rickety legs out into the sunshine and watch him grow strong. Take a sick soul to Christ. Serving him, living in his presence, the pallor slips away and robust strength comes back again. And when you have learned to love as Christ loved, so that you want to serve all men everywhere, the good and the bad, as Christ served them, then you become a healthy soul again, celestial and strong."

"And then will I die? or, as you would put it, then will I go home from this hospital?" the mother asked.

"Maybe so," the visitor continued. "But people who grow well do not always go home from the hospital. Some stay on and nurse the rest. And some leave the hospital who are not well. They may be getting worse and must be sent to specialists for an operation, for they will not respond to treatment here. Or maybe they are getting better and will grow well anywhere. And some are sent out, contrary to the Great Physician's will. Men kill one another—that is not God's will. Reckless drivers and poverty and wickedness kill many. Men do these things in spite of God's will. There are many reasons why people leave any hospital. But your little girl was not killed by men. She went hence in spite of all that you could do. And just as certainly as there was a spiritual reason for her coming to earth, there is also a spiritual reason for her going home."

"Did you say my little girl was a sinner and so was born here? I thought little children were innocent." The eyes of the mother were flashing now.

"No. I did not say it. I did say she came here for a spiritual reason. Christ came here in his perfection to teach us to love. He was not born here because he sinned in some other place. Our difficulty is that so frequently we try to make one answer answer everything. Christ came in perfection to teach us love. And you say that your little child was a celestial visitor who came to teach you to love. Did you not say she lifted you into new heights of love when she was here, and that now when you arise to those heights she seemed even yet to be with you? She came to teach you to love. Even now behind the veil she leads your heart to loveliness. That is why she seems present when you rise to love. She is present though unseen."

"I believe it. I believe it—only—" and the shadows came again upon the mother's face. "I don't believe in the transmigration of souls."

"Neither do I," the visitor added. "That belief has in it none of hope. If a man who becomes piggish is to be born as a pig, there is nothing in being a beast that will cure him of his beastliness. But most of us believe that it would be good for any man with imperfections if he could go to some place whose very nature, like Colorado air, could cure his malady. In that there is hope. And, after all, don't we all already believe that the human soul will struggle forward through the years to come from victory to victory? We used to feel that at death some people became perfect, to dwell in change-less perfection forever, while others were damned to hopeless punishment forever more. But to-day most of us regard heaven as a succession of places of growth. And few of us believe in the old hell where a divine mob burns someone at the stake forever in the name of God. For us the universe is all a series of redemptive states with the God of Love ever trying to cure our diseases and imperfections that we may become ever more like him. For us perfection only means perfect growth. Your difficulty has arisen in your idea that we are living in the first state of our growth. Who knows that this may not be one of the others?"

"But you have destroyed the only thing I think of as myself—that is, my self-consciousness. I want to know who I am. I want my little child to know who I am. I wouldn't care for any progress that I did not know I made." Again the mother's tears began to flow.

"But you will know it if you make progress. Only the wages of your sin is the death of your self-consciousness. You start again unconscious of past failures. God puts them as far away from you as the east is from the west, for God knows you can get on faster undiscouraged by a bad past. But should you grow, you'll know it—going on to ever new heights of consciousness and comradeship with God, unless some day, as Christ did, for Love's sake, you should be willing for awhile to empty yourself of divine consciousness and be born as a little babe and teach men how to love. And if you do that thing, may God richly bless your efforts, that those among the dead in sin on earth to whom you come, may learn in truth the beauty of real love. And when your task on earth is done and you have returned to the joys of your heavenly home, as Evelyn has, may folks not weep too much, but all be filled with joy that they have come to know you, and that through you they have come to know what Life is, for it is Love. Now abideth Love. It always will."

"And so you think she knows me and loves me yet?" the mother asked.

"Surely. I read one day of a man who came home from an earthly hospital. He felt no pain. He had no worries. He walked with a glad enthusiasm that scarcely touched the ground. When he came to his own house he turned in and gaily sprang up the steps. He called to his wife, but received no answer. Yet he could see her sitting in her chair weeping. He put his arm around her and kissed her and told her how glad he was to be there. But she did not look up. Suddenly he wondered, were people calling him dead? Could this glad exuberance he felt be that? If he were now immortal, what worlds there must be to explore, what glories to behold, what meetings with the friends he'd loved and lost awhile. Yet before he went, he lingered trying to wipe away the tears of the wife who thought him dead; trying to make her understand that love abides, purged of its earthly dross and limitations. And so, dear mother of Evelyn, if sometimes when you weep, you sense the presence of a little sprite who tries to wipe your tears away, look up and smile with consciousness that she too can be glad with you, for you have learned the Love which drives out fears. And it abides with life eternal."

XVII

THERE IS NO DEATH

Frederick Spence

"Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"—*1 Cor. 15. 54b-55.*

A keen and capable lawyer, in the midst of a eulogy of his dead friend, a prominent figure in the financial world, suddenly and dramatically paused. Stretching out his hands and pointing to the still figure, he cried in tones tense and despairing, "Death! Death! Death is wreckage!"

It was my task immediately to follow this piercing cry and change, if possible, the spirit of rebellion and despair which it had created into a spirit of confidence and of hope. Is death wreckage? Is life a mere puppet, moved by the master of the show, and at the end of the play flung into the discard? No! Death is not all loss, because death does not destroy; it merely releases.

All that was best in our friends stands out in bas-relief after death. In the flesh their faults often seem to dominate. They crowd upon us. The superficial, the physical, the immediate makes it almost impossible to see the real self. But how the superficial sloughs off at death, the elements of beauty and strength begin to loom large, and we see how in the past, which we had often misjudged, the truth was that:

> "Their life flowed on a gentle stream,
> In whose calm death, the beautiful
> And pure alone were mirrored!"

How often in the shadows we cry:

> "O for the touch of a vanished hand
> And the sound of a voice that is still!"

We do not hear their footfall and there is no audible voice, but our friends march through the halls of memory and speak to us in the recollection of all that was best in their lives.

If the evil that men do lives after them, it is pre-eminently true that the good also lives after them. Every kind word, every unselfish deed, every noble thought expressed lives long after we have gone in the lives and memories of those who knew and loved us best. It ought to be a pressing question as to how much there is in us that is really worth immortalizing.

A young lawyer said to me one day: "You probably do not think me very religious. But I want to say that my mother's life was never so real to me as it is to-day. She has been gone fifteen years, as you know. I rarely think of her as I knew her in the flesh, but I never face any issue involving morals or religion that I do not first ask myself the question, 'What would my mother do, if she were in my place?' She influences me for good to-day far more than at any time during her life in the flesh." Life is richer because of our dead.

Death breaks down all the barriers of time and space. Stanton's remark, as he stood by the bier of the great captain, Lincoln, "Now he belongs to the ages," has significance for all our dead. Death no longer holds them to locality. Never was I so deeply impressed with this fact as when I stood by the old home in England after the death of my mother. In the past I had always thought of her as being five thousand miles away in a given place and in relation to a given time. Now she is not afar off, but ever present in spiritual fellowship, a gracious influence untouched by cold or heat, by sickness or health, by time or space.

If this, however, is all that can be said for death, are the gains commensurate with the loss sustained? Does the adventure of life itself, do the survivals of death, the memories, the influences, quite justify the tragedy of dissolution? But this is not all. Death is not an end; it is a medium; it is a way between; it is an incident in the progress of life;

> "It is naught but the opening of a door
> Into a room more luminous and large
> Than that we leave behind us."

"As the buds burst forth, so life bursts forth. Death is life, breaking into eternal bloom."

We may well ask, "Can the assumptions

of one's faith be justified? Are there any reasonable grounds for our belief in the continuity of personality?" We think there are reasonable grounds, but, in the last analysis, immortality "is not an argument without. It is a consciousness within." Yet its truth is not without witness. Science has strengthened men's faith in a future life. "When some scientist says, 'Death ends all,' he speaks as a scientist dealing only with so-called physical laws. In his denial he is merely confessing his own limitations, forgetting that even his science depends upon something beyond his science—consciousness. Outside of consciousness science has no existence. Our conception of matter exists only in consciousness."

It is difficult for us to believe that the universe, which seems to take such infinite care to preserve every form of energy, would be wasteful and reckless with the highest form of human energy, the human mind. Doctor Fitchett has pointed out that a speck of radium, sufficient merely to cover the point of a needle, contains enough energy to set an electric bell ringing for at least thirty thousand years. Can we conceive it possible that the Force which conserves the energy in radium will be so ruthless and blind as to blot out the mind and personality of a Madame Curie, who discovered and applied the radium energy and sent it out on its ministry of healing?

The hope of immortality is in us as an instinct. We recognize the purposefulness of instinct in animal life. Why should we deny it in the spiritual life of man? It is said that the mussel carries its young on the outer gill plate and does not set them free unless there is a stickleback or its like around. Then she sets them free like a lot of boys rushing from the open schoolroom. They fasten on the stickleback and begin another chapter in life.

"I go to prove my soul!
I see my way as birds their trackless way.
I shall arrive! What time, what circuit first
I ask not: but unless God send his hail
Of blinding fireballs, sleet or stifling snow,
In some time, his good time, I shall arrive;
He guides me and the bird. In his good time!"

We are haunted by the sense of eternities.

The instinct for life is deep and regnant. It is life that haunts us, not death. Like Banquo's ghost, it comes as a haunting presence to spoil the selfish feast of those who are absorbed in the lust of gold or the mad world of pleasure. That instinct for life, for immortality, will not die. It defies our logic; it breaks through our prejudices; it laughs at our agnosticism; it triumphs over our despairs; it mocks at our materialism; it cries, "I shall not die, but live."

"There is no death! The stars go down
To rise upon some fairer shore,

. . . . .

For all the boundless universe
Is life—there are no dead."

What a marvelous thing is the human mind! Some see it as a triangle, beginning at the base and fading out at its apex. Others see it reversed and beginning at its apex, expanding to its broad base. The mind progresses, seeks to free itself from the physical, asserts its own independence, and lives a life determined by its own laws.

The brain is not the mind. It is the

instrument through which the mind functions. "We cannot bring ourselves to believe that a complex of brain fibers can think, can compose an epic, can devise a cathedral, guide a nation, create a civilization, or develop the Christian religion." Waiting for a train in a small village, I strolled over to the church to while away the time. In the dilapidated parlor was an old piano. I ran my fingers across its yellow keys, but there was no responsive harmony. A few broken sounds came through. I did not say, "Music is dead," for music was still in the Universe. It was in Handel, in Beethoven, in my own mind and soul. The instrument through which the music should have expressed itself no longer functioned, but the music was still there.

How true it is that death appears just as we really begin to live. For what makes life? Money? Things? No, truth, love, friendship, joy, peace, discernment, wisdom, honesty, aspiration—everything good and spiritually constructive are the facts of being, and we are scarce awake to these when we have to die. It is hard to believe that

God will destroy the tree as it begins to bear fruitage. No, death does not end all. Life is written on the ascending scale. It is a great adventure. Life continues from where we left it a moment before, with the best dominant.

Bishop McConnell tells of going to the door of one of his old professors who was at the point of death. The old man asked the young preacher to come in. With a glow on his face he said that in a little while it would all be over, but that five minutes after he arrived on the other shore, he would be seeking out one of his scholarly opponents and eagerly debating with him one of the subjects upon which they had disagreed on earth.

Death is no great break in the course of life; it is an incident. It is not an interruption; it is an evolution. As a lad I used to capture the caterpillars from the elder bushes, place them in a glass-covered box and watch them as they built their sepulcher—the chrysalis. The unknowing would say, "It is dead"; but one day out of the chrysalis came a beautiful butterfly, which poised for a moment upon its worn-out shell and then soared into the sunlight.

> "There is no death! What seems so is
> transition.
> This life of mortal breath
> Is but the suburb of the life elysian,
> Whose portal we call Death."

Eternity is not a something into which we enter at death. It is with us here and now as a consciousness. The man who walks with God in time does not question the possibility of walking with God in eternity. Eternal life is the result of a vital relationship with God. With Jesus immortality was not an argument to be proved; it was a fact, self-evident and conclusive. "In my Father's house are many mansions: *if it were not so,* I would have told you."

Our friends are not lost. They have marched out in the mist of the morning and with trembling fingers touched a gate that swings only inward into the light.

Donald Hankey tells of the beloved captain in the World War, who went one morning for the first time over the top. He had not gone far into No Man's Land before he fell beneath the enemies' bullets. He was carried back by his men into the trenches, and as they looked with tender gaze upon his closed eyes and still form, one of the lads cried out of his heart: "But somewhere he lives! Somewhere he lives!" That cry finds an echo in the deepest recesses of our own hearts. How insistent is faith that somewhere our loved ones live.

"There is a hope, a quiet hope,
Within my heart instilled,
That if undaunted on I sail,
The guiding star shall never pale,
But shine within my labor's scope,
Fulfilled!

"And there's a tide, a quiet tide,
Flowing toward a goal,
That sweeps by every humble shore,
And at its fullest ebbs no more,
And on that final swell shall ride,
My soul!"
—From *If a Man Die*, by J. D. Jones.
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XVIII

BLESSED ARE THEY THAT MOURN

William Edward Shaw

"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."—*Matt. 5. 4.*

These are familiar words. Many of us learned them when we were children. They are a part of that priceless heritage which is ours because we grew up in a Christian home or were taught portions of the Holy Scriptures in the Sunday school. We recognize them as a part of those gracious utterances with which our Master began the Sermon on the Mount. As we have repeated them over and over again they have soothed our hearts like music.

But though so familiar and so treasured in our hearts, it is doubtful whether we have really thought about their full meaning. We have allowed them to pass our lips and slip easily across our minds without pausing to consider how strange is the truth which they set forth. "Blessed," "happy" are they that mourn. A strange assertion! How different from the conception which we generally have of those who mourn! If we were hearing these words for the first time, we might easily wonder who could have made such a strange statement.

Our hearts instinctively go out in sympathy to those who are taking to its last resting place all that is mortal of a loved one. We do not think of them in terms of blessing. We see the emblem of death at the door of a home. A loved one has gone. There is a vacant place in the family circle. We do not think of that home as being blessed. Yet here are the words of Jesus. "Blessed are they that mourn." If we did not know who uttered them, we might conclude that they were spoken by one who knew nothing of the human heart, who did not understand the sorrow, the bitter pain, the dull ache of these days when life seems so empty. But Jesus knew. His understanding and insight surpassed the knowledge of all men. What, then, did he mean by these strange words?

I am very sure he did not mean to minimize the anguish, the heartache, which are ours when our loved ones slip away and leave us facing life without their companionship. He knows full well how difficult it is for us to take up the routine duties "when life tumbles in." His compassionate heart shares our sorrow in the hour of bereavement. But, knowing all about it and sharing it with us, he declared, "Blessed are they that mourn." Possibly Jesus meant to say that for those who mourn there are blessings which do not come in any other way. Out of the very experience come enrichments of life which they would otherwise miss. The mood of sorrow causes that attitude of soul which makes it possible for the Father above to bestow some of his richest gifts.

At no time in life have we so correct an appraisal of the values of life as in the hour of mourning. Much of the time our sense of value is sadly distorted. Some of the things which seem of supreme importance and for which we so feverishly strive have little or no permanent value. We busy ourselves about tawdry trinkets and glittering tinsel, paying little or no attention to the things which are most worth while. Then comes the hour of mourning. In the surging tumult of that experience our sense of values is changed. We see the shallowness, the cheapness, the insufficiency of some of the things to which we had given so much of time and effort. Pleasure, position, money, shrink into their rightful place in our thought. Character, love, faith, destiny, and God appear as the supreme things of life. In the gray light that closes about us they stand out as the great essentials without which life has no meaning. Challenged by this true perspective, we resolve that henceforth these things shall have first place in our lives.

In the hour of mourning beautiful flowers of sympathy, thoughtfulness, and love spring up along our pathway. We live such busy lives, rushing feverishly from one thing to another. The days are so crowded that we have little time to cultivate friendships or to give expression to that feeling of comradeship which dwells in the normal human heart. Life is highly organized and the stress and strain of many demands tax our strength and absorb our time. Each one seems engrossed in his own affairs. Often the little courtesies that take away the sharp edge of life are neglected. The world seems cold and hard and we wonder whether anyone cares about us. Then death invades our home. Immediately come expressions of sympathy from unexpected sources. Persons whom we had almost forgotten offer their condolence. Neighbors whom we scarcely know ask what they can do to assist us. Business associates who have seemed to give no thought to anything except business reveal hearts that are tender and full of sympathy. Floral offerings give mute evidence of thoughtfulness, and their beauty and fragrance bring balm to our bleeding hearts. The world will never again seem quite so cold and hard.

The physical world affords an analogy. We love the days of the summer's sunshine and rejoice in a cloudless sky. Yet when there is continual sunshine, the ground becomes hard, vegetation withers and dries up, the fields become scorched and brown, the shrubs lose their freshness, the season's crop is imperiled. We all recall those days when the sky was cloudless and we eagerly watched for some signs of possible rainfall. At last the clouds gathered and broke in refreshing showers upon the parched and thirsty earth. Soon the lawns and fields were covered with a carpet of green, the foliage of trees and shrubs glistened afresh, the fields renewed their promise of abundant harvest. So it is in our lives. Days of continued health and unbroken prosperity allow us to become hard and unsympathetic. Our hearts and the hearts of our friends become parched under the glare of self-centered routine. Almost unconsciously we neglect each other. Then the clouds of sorrow burst upon us and at once hearts grow tender, fresh evidences of love appear, beautiful flowers of sympathy, kindness, and love bring joy to our hearts. We begin to understand the meaning of these words of Jesus.

In the hour of mourning we draw closer to our heavenly Father than at any other time. It is so easy to neglect him. We become wholly occupied with the demands upon us and give ourselves to other things. Our family and our friends take so much of our time that there is none left for Him who is our best friend. Our business, our housework, our social engagements, our club, the daily paper, our recreations—these absorb our attention and there is no place in our lives for prayer, for the church, for God. We find time to tune in on our favorite radio station, but do not have time to be quiet, that we may hear the voice of the Father. We make frequent journeys over paved highways, but fail to use the highways upon which souls travel to the Father's house. Earthly business makes its insistent demands and crowds out the Father's business. We are punctual at office and shop, but irregular in reaching the place of worship. We meet our social engagements promptly, but are careless about our tryst with the Most High. Then comes the hour of mourning. Human strength is not sufficient. Human sympathy does not fully satisfy the yearning of our hearts. The human voice cannot speak the message for which our souls cry out. We breathe our prayer to God and to our joy he is at our side.

Two little boys as they played talked of their fears. One was afraid of a big black bear. The other was afraid of the dark, declaring, "I just hate to see the dark come." The other boy said, "Why, I am glad to see the dark come." An older person who overheard the conversation asked, "Why are you glad to see the dark come?" With a smile upon his boyish face the little fellow said, "Don't you know? My father gets home just about the time that the dark comes."

A beautiful parable of life! Our heavenly Father, never far from us, always comes close to us in those moments when the shadows gather about.

Strange as it may seem, it is when we mourn that we are most certain of immortality. At no moment in our lives does the soul make its demand upon immortality quite so insistently as when we stand by the open grave of a loved one. Overwhelmed by sorrow, our grief-inspired vision sees beyond the grave and catches the foregleam of never-ending day. Our very being cries out against the power of death and defiantly we exclaim,

> "This body is my house—it is not I;
> Herein I sojourn till, in some far sky,
> I lease a fairer dwelling, built to last
> Till all the carpentry of earth is past."

Face to face with the reality of death, we hear most clearly the voice of our Christ speaking to us even as he spoke to the sorrowing Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

These words answer the longing of our sorrowing hearts. They give us the assurance that our loved ones are not lost to us forever. Death has conquered the body, but life triumphs in the realm of the spirit. In this glad assurance of immortality the clouds of our sorrow are lifted and we understand the truth of these words of Christ: "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."

XIX

LOVE LOOKS AT DEATH

McIlyar Hamilton Lichliter

"Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."—*John 11. 23-26.*

They Softly Walk

They are not gone who pass
Beyond the clasp of hand,
Out from the strong embrace.
They are but come so close,
We need not grope with hands,
Nor look to see, nor try
To catch the sound of feet.
They have put off their shoes
Softly to walk by day
Within our thoughts, to tread
At night our dream-led paths
Of sleep.

They are not lost who find
The sunset gate; the goal
Of all their faithful years.
Not lost are they who reach
The summit of their climb,
The peak above the clouds
And storms. They are not lost
Who find the light of sun
And stars and God.

—*Hugh Robert Orr.*
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There is a story of an old French peasant and his wife who opened their humble home to a wounded soldier and nursed him back to strength. On leaving, the man gave them a thousand-franc note. They did not know what it was. To them, it was only a pretty picture which they framed and hung on the wall as a souvenir of the soldier's visit. One day, with pride, they exhibited the picture to a chance visitor and learned that it meant more money than they had hoped to see in all their lives.

Mr. Spurgeon, who told the story, says that this is just what Martha did when she stood with Jesus by the grave of her brother. Jesus said to her, "Thy brother shall rise again." The words had not the slightest value for the present. She took them from the Master's lips and hung a frame around them. "I know," she said, "that he shall rise again at the last day."

"At the last day"—how many sorrowing hearts have kept that frame around the promise of Christ! There is a resurrection, we assure ourselves, but it is a long way off. Some one we love very dearly has slipped away and all that we seem to remember are certain phrases from the burial service of the church. "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, looking for the general Resurrection in the last day, and the life of the world to come, through our Lord Jesus Christ." We turn back to the day's task with a heavy heart and try to say the words of the old creed: "I believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting," but we find little comfort in it all. Easter comes and, for the moment, we feel a thrill of hope. Easter passes and life goes on just the same. We hang the Easter promise on the walls of memory. It is a pretty picture, a very pretty picture,

LOVE LOOKS AT DEATH

"But oh for the touch of a vanished hand
And the sound of a voice that is still!"

That is how Love looks at Death. The Easter glory passes: the Easter problem remains. The flowers fade, the music dies away into silence, the message of the minister passes into forgetfulness, but the eternal questioning abides. How may one make that picture a comforting reality? How may one transmute hope into experience?

THE QUEST BEHIND THE VEIL

There are many who try to help us. There has never been a time when someone has not said, "You may touch that vanished hand; you may hear that stilled voice." The primitive savage dreams that his dead stand right by his side bringing messages from the other world. A gifted scientist, who was a member of the Society for Psychical Research, told us that we may "touch hands with the dead" and published to the world his efforts to establish communication with his son who died gloriously in France. For centuries men and women have traveled hopefully down the road to En-Dor.

So far as actual results are concerned, the scientist has little more to offer than the savage. An elaborate technic of communication has been evolved, but, as yet, we have had no authentic message from behind the veil. Love will always seek to bridge this chasm, of course, but one brings back from the quest just what he takes. He hears what his own clamorous heart insists upon hearing. He sees what is only the projection of his own passionate desires.

> "Strange, is it not, that of the myriads who
> Before us passed the door of darkness through,
> Not one returns to tell us of the road
> Which to discover, we must travel too."

The biologist tries to help us. He too has been looking at Death. He tells us that we are not to worry. Death is not an enemy but a friend. It plays a heroic part in the evolution of life. Were there no death, he says to us, life would be stagnant, insensate. Death ushers in the higher forms of life, and is, in its very self, the prophecy of infinite growth.

That may be true, but how does it comfort one when Love looks at Death? After all, we are very personal in our joys and in our sorrows. It may be quite true that death is a significant biological force working out, through long ages, higher forms of life. But how does that impersonal and detached conception heal a breaking heart? One may say that a destructive tidal wave readjusts a perilous coast line, but that is small comfort to those whose loved ones have been swept away on the flood. When someone we love has been taken from our side, we shall not refrain from grief simply because we are assured that, with every death, the race improves its quality. Even if that were true, as some think it is, it does not comfort.

Love is found invariably phrasing the never-ending protest against loss. "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Martha had seen the Master's power over disease and was unwilling, without protest, to accept the fact of death. That is how we act to-day. We storm the heavens with our protesting cries. "Why was he taken? His life was so full of promise. Why did he have to go?" "Why did she have to die, when a family was depending upon her?" "What have I done that I should suffer this terrible loss?" Hundreds of protesting questions like these have been poured into the heart of one who enters a house of grief and tries to comfort. It is the most natural, the most human thing in the world. And God understands. He knows that it is Love protesting against what seems the tragic unreasonableness of Death. He understands, too, when with almost frantic eagerness we set forth on some occult quest to pierce behind the veil.

All of this happens when Death comes. No one has come back to tell us all about that other world. So, we turn back to One who gave Easter its meaning and we ask him: "What did *you* mean when you said to a broken-hearted woman, 'I am the resurrection and the life'?" How does the answer to that question bring comfort when Love looks at Death?

THE BY-PRODUCTS OF PROTEST

It is significant that we dare ask such questions and make such protests. It is the touchstone of our greatness. Our basic unhappiness is, in reality, the secret of our comfort. Man *knows* that he has to die. He is conscious of a spiritual heritage denied to the animals that do not know what death means. Man can ask questions about death, he can formulate theories of immortality, he can utter his protests. It is the Easter problem, then, that makes the Easter glory. It is in the tension created by the passion to live, on the one hand, and by the certainty of death, on the other, that thoughtful minds find the secret of comfort.

Not that there is any proof of immortality. Let us tell the truth about it. There is no proof one way or the other. Immortality cannot be proven, nor can it be disproven. There are intimations of immortality, there are passionate protests against the finality of death, there are equally passionate "assurances" that we are immortal, there are a multitude of theories for speculative philosophy to play with—but there is no proof. The only thing that releases this tension is an attitude of faith.

The by-products of Love's protest against

Death are the hopes which make us strong. The doctrine of immortality was born of the eternal questionings of the human heart, questionings which issue in hope. Sit, for a moment, at the feet of a great Catholic, a mighty scholar, and one of the greatest mystics of modern times. Baron von Hügel said: "I wait for the Breath of God. Perhaps he will call me to-day, to-night. I would live to finish my book, but, if not, I shall live it out in the beyond."

How many of us can say that? Can we say, "I would like to live to see my children educated and settled in life, but, if not, then I shall be closer to them in spirit than I can be in the flesh"? Can we say, "I would like to finish my work, see this thing through that I am doing, but, if not, I shall begin again the next morning"? Can we say, "I would like to live to see all the amazing things that will happen in the next few years and to have some part in a larger service to mankind, but, if not, I shall be myself a part of all that wonderful future, seeing more clearly than I see now, and understanding where now everything is clouded and obscure"? That attitude of faith is the revelation of Easter to the weary hearts of men. It is a hint of the incomparable sweetness of the farther shore.

The Glory in the Gloom

That seems to be what was in the mind of Jesus as he stood by the grave of Lazarus. He is saying: "If you will become what I am, you will share all that I have. It is not a doctrine that I offer you, but the comfort of a Living Presence. Live with me, look out at life through my eyes, accept my estimates of character, and you will see that death does not matter at all. Follow me, and you will feel the thrill of a deathless spirit. I *am* the Resurrection and the Life. Your body may dissolve into its native dust, but what of that? What are bodies, after all, but mere tenements of clay? Something looks out of your eyes which is far more significant than the delicate mechanism of sight. Something lives in the clasp of your hand which is more than the muscles which grip and hold. Something speaks in your voice which transcends the organs of human speech. Call it what you will, the Ego, the Personality, the Self. This is what cannot die, *what does not die.*"

Life in Christ is deathless. Our loved ones are not dead, but alive. They are closer to us now than when they walked by our side. They have drifted beyond the touch of hands and lips. They cannot drift beyond the reach of Love.

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